

'BAMA

INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

DECEMBER, 1993

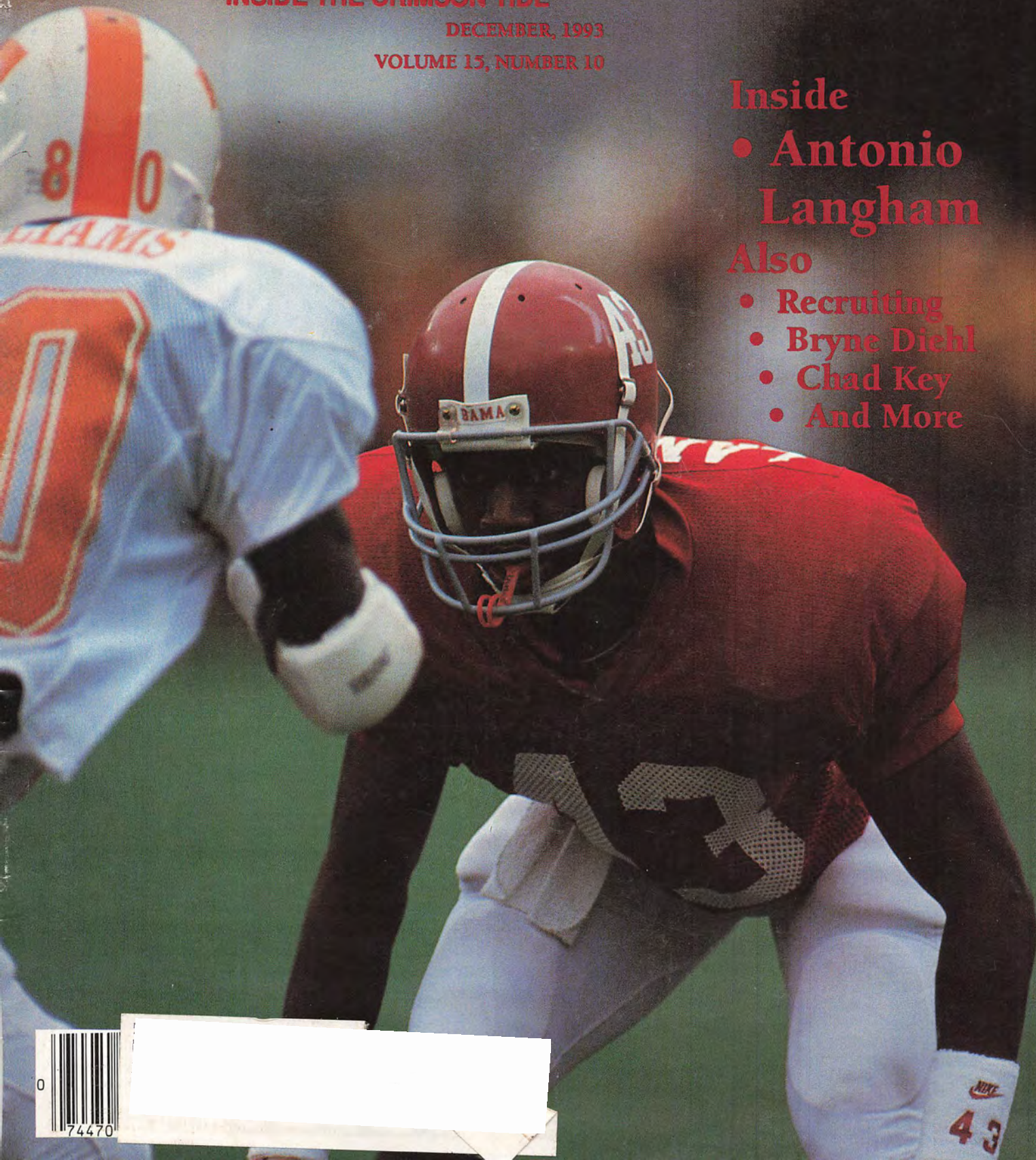
VOLUME 15, NUMBER 10

Inside

• Antonio
Langham

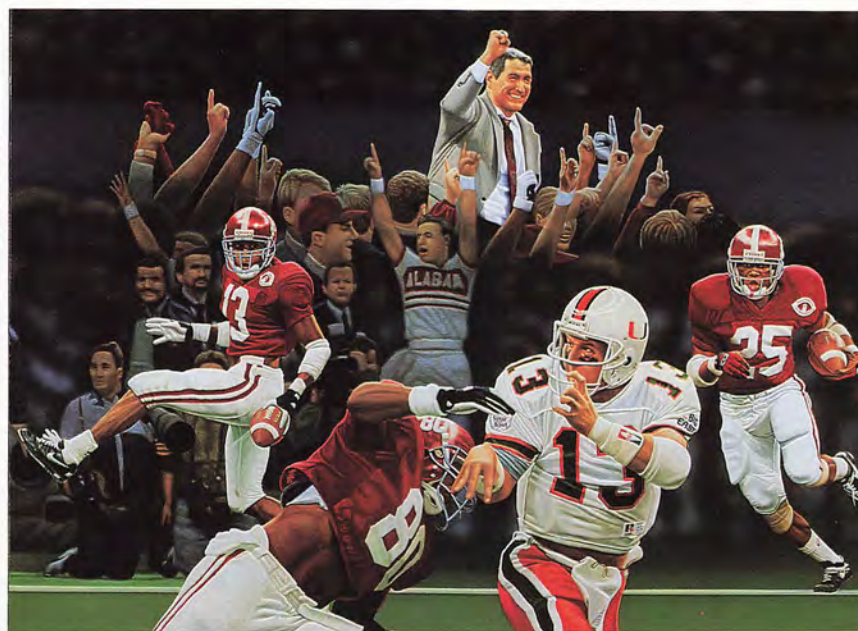
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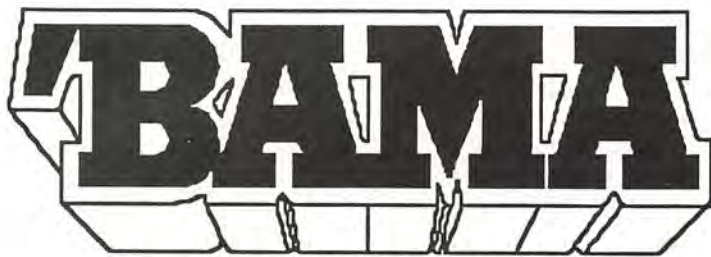
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DECEMBER, 1993

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by Donna Fromme

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BAMA SCORECARD

The Wrong Kind Of Break

Alabama Head Basketball Coach David Hobbs probably was hoping for a few breaks this year after last year's jinxed season, but he wasn't hoping for the one his team got. That one came at the expense of the cheekbone of freshman center Antonio McDyess. McDyess, a 6-9, 215-pounder who had been very impressive in preseason work, underwent surgery November 12 and was expected to be out at least a month.

That wasn't the only injury for Bama as the team entered the third week of preparation for the upcoming season. Junior forward Jason Caffey, the Tide's top returning player, has been unable to shake the effects of an injury in his ankle area. Additionally, redshirt freshman center Wade Kaiser, who was in the collision in which McDyess was hurt, suffered not one, but two, blows to the head and was limited in work for a few days. And Roy Rogers, the sophomore center who missed most of last year with a knee injury, continues to have swelling in the knee.

Combined with transfer forward Jamal Faulkner not being eligible until the end of December, and it appears Alabama will not be able to show it's best team until the Southeastern Conference schedule begins in January.

With all hands available, best guess at a starting lineup would be Marvin Orange at point guard, either Anthony Brown or Artie Griffin at big guard, Faulkner at small forward, Caffey at power forward and McDyess at center.

The Picks

Sports reporters attending the Southeastern Conference preseason basketball media event in Birmingham didn't have much trouble picking the division champions. Arkansas was a unanimous pick to win the West with all 41 of those voting (over 250 could have voted) picking the Razorbacks. Kentucky got 40 first place votes to win the East. Alabama was picked second in the West, followed by LSU, Auburn, Mississippi State and Ole Miss. In the East, Vanderbilt was the pick to finish second, followed by Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Nationally, Alabama has been picked 18th by *Basketball Weekly* and 24th by *Dick Vitale's College Basketball*.

On To The NBA

Which Southeastern Conference school has the most former players performing in the National Basketball Association? Tough pick. Kentucky probably, or maybe LSU or Arkansas. Nope. Alabama.

At the beginning of the NBA season, which is shortly after the completion of the NBA playoffs, there were 38 former SEC players on NBA rosters. Among SEC teams, Alabama had seven alumni in the NBA,

compared to six for Arkansas, five for LSU and Georgia and four for Kentucky. Bama just missed having eight former players as Buck Johnson was waived by the Washington Bullets five minutes before the deadline before the beginning of the season.

Former Alabama players on NBA opening day rosters are Keith Askins with Miami, David Benoit with Utah, Robert Horry with Houston, Derrick McKey with Indiana, James Robinson with Portland, Latrell Sprewell with Golden State, and Ennis Whatley with Atlanta.

Women Get Respect

A couple of national publications are out with basketball predictions and the Alabama women's team of Coach Rick Moody gets a lot of respect. *College Sports* picks the Tide to finish 13th in the nation, which is good news. The bad news is that three other SEC teams rank ahead of Alabama, including Vanderbilt being picked number one. *Basketball Times* also picked Vanderbilt number one, but didn't list a top 20. The publication picked Alabama as one of the teams that will make the 64-team NCAA field. Both publications picked Tide junior guard Neisa Johnson to their five-woman All-America squads. *Basketball Times* listed Alabama sophomore center Yolanda Watkins as among the other top players in the nation and listed Bama signee Monique Walls as one of the nation's top ten junior college transfers.

The preseason Associated Press poll has Alabama's women 19th in the nation.

Dedication

The gymnasium at Marshall County High School in Lewisburg, Tennessee, has been dedicated in honor of Dottie Kelso, the Alabama assistant women's basketball coach who died in September. She was a former star player at Marshall County, leading her team to the state championship.

This year's Bama team uniforms include a black patch in her memory. Other memorials so far include a scholarship in her name at The University and a scholarship for a girl from her former high school.

A moment of silence was observed prior to Alabama's opening game this year, and former players and coaches will be in Tuscaloosa January 30 for the LSU game, at which time she will be honored.

Tide Golfer Injured

Alabama golfer Greg Letson, a junior from Florence, was in serious condition in Tuscaloosa's DCH Regional Medical Center after an automobile accident in which his car was struck broadside by an ambulance. Letson, who was Alabama's leading player in the fall season with a 72.4-stroke average in four tournaments, suffered a head injury, cracked pelvis, and numerous cuts and abrasions. Although the prognosis for his

complete recovery is good, it is expected to be lengthy.

Tops With Topps

Alabama freshman pitcher Chris Eilers was named 1993 recipient of the Golden Diamond Amateur Junior Baseball Player of the Year Award for the state of Alabama. The award is presented annually by the Topps Company, best-known for its bubble gum with baseball cards, and selected by USA Baseball. Eilers is a graduate of Butler High in Huntsville, where he was Player of the Year. He was selected for the U.S. Olympic Festival in San Antonio and for the all-star team that came out of that event.

Women Netters Get Coach

Jim Tressler, an assistant at the University of Florida for the past three years, has been named head coach of the Alabama women's tennis team. He replaces Karin Gaiser, who resigned this fall to return to her family's business in Ohio.

Tressler is also from Ohio, a native of Cincinnati, and he is a graduate of Cincinnati where he was captain of the men's tennis team and was a ranked player.

Florida had remarkable success in Tressler's three years, an 86-3 overall record, three SEC championships, an NCAA title, and NCAA champions in both singles and doubles. He previously coached at Indiana and served as an instructor in the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy. He has also worked with touring professional players.

Tennis Reunion

While the general rule is that college coaches look for new players, Alabama Men's Tennis Coach John Kreis is looking for former players. That's because the Tide is planning a reunion of former Tiders the weekend of the Southeastern Conference Championship Tournament, being hosted by Bama April 28-May 1. Anyone with knowledge of the whereabouts of former Alabama men's team players should contact Becky Hopf in Alabama's sports information office, (205) 348-6084 or Post Office Box 870391, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487.

Spring Sports Fall Rankings

Although golf and tennis are generally designated as spring sports, both include limited fall schedules which have a bearing on national rankings. Alabama's men's golf team played four tournaments, won one (the University of Tennessee's Tournament of Champions), and is currently ranked 15th in the nation. The men's tennis team of Coach John Kreis is rated 7th, while the women's tennis team is ranked 23rd. Although the women's golf team of Coach Betty Palmer is not ranked it was an encouraging fall for the Tide, including a runner-up finish in the Memphis State Invitational.

National Finalist

Former Alabama gymnast Dana Dobransky is one of eight finalists from winter and spring sports for the NCAA Top Six Award. Selection is based on athletics ability (50 per cent), academic achievement (25 per cent) and character, leadership and extracurricular activities (25 per cent).

Fall sports finalists will be selected later and the Today's Top Six will be selected by the NCAA Honors Committee. They will be recognized at the honors dinner during the 1994 NCAA Convention.

Dobransky is a two-time balance beam national champion and a five-time All-America. She is the only Alabama gymnast ever to score a perfect 10 on balance beam, doing so twice. She was named Academic All-Southeastern Conference three times and was a scholastic All-America and two-time GTE All-America. She has already been awarded post graduate scholarships by both the SEC and the NCAA. Earlier this year she was named the state's NCAA Woman of the Year.

And Another Finalist

Former Alabama gymnast Dee Foster won the Honda Award as the nation's top collegiate gymnast and is now a finalist for the Honda-Broderick Cup which honors the Collegiate Woman Athlete of the Year. The winner will be selected from among the 10 women named best in individual sports during the past year with the presentation of the award on January 10, 1994, in San Antonio.

Foster was a four-time nominee for the Honda Award for gymnastics. A 17-time All-America, she is the only gymnast in history to place among the top three in all-around at the NCAA Championships four years. She won the title as a freshman. She set an NCAA record with a perfect 10 in five consecutive meets and turned in a 10 a total of eight times.

Foster, who earned her degree in sports psychology, is now with the United States Olympic Committee in Atlanta.

Wells Is Good

Becki Wells was signed by the Alabama women's track and field team as a middle distance runner since she had the nation's fastest high school times in both the 800- and 1500-meter events last year. But Wells was also ticketed for cross country competition, since she had finished 10th in the nation as a prep. And she had a very impressive freshman debut.

Wells defeated two-time SEC champion Deena Drossin of Arkansas, last year's NCAA runner-up, to win the women's SEC championship in Baton Rouge. Then Wells led the Alabama women into the NCAA Championship meet as she won the NCAA District III meet in Greenville, South Carolina.

Bostick To Villanova

John Bostick, a highly-respected assistant basketball coach at Alabama under C. M. Newton and Wimp Sanderson, has been named senior associate athletics director at Villanova.

Bostick spent 20 years with Newton, as an assistant coach at Alabama and Vanderbilt and, most recently, as Newton's top assistant athletics director at Kentucky. Bostick was assistant athletics director for compliance at Kentucky. At Villanova he will be the top assistant to Gene DeFilippo, a former Kentucky associate athletics director.

The Benchmark

When a writer for *College & Pro Football Newsweekly* took on the impossible task of selecting the 25 best college football coaches and the 10 worst college coaches, he used a statement that he attributed either to longtime Delaware Head Coach Tubby Raymond or former LSU Head Coach Charles McClendon regarding Paul Bryant. One or the other (or perhaps someone else) reportedly said of Bryant, "He could take his team and beat your team or he could take your team and beat his team." That,

said the author, is how he judged the candidates for his list.

Incidentally, he selected former Bryant assistant Howard Schnellenberger, now head coach at Louisville, as best in the nation.

Two former Tide players made the list, Arkansas' Danny Ford third and Mississippi State's Jackie Sherrill 21st. Former Bama Assistant Dave Rader, now head coach at Tulsa, was rated 17th. Although Alabama Head Coach Gene Stallings, unanimous coach of the year last year, did not make the list, he has a 13-2 record against those on it.

There were no former Alabama players or coaches on the 10 worst list.

Big News

Question: What's the latest on the NCAA inquiry into Alabama's football program insofar as the allegations of Gene Jelks are concerned?

Answer: Nothing, and there probably won't be until the matter is dropped, probably within a month so it doesn't affect recruiting.

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A Joy, But For How Long?

by Kirk McNair

Wondrous Deuce will be a leading Heisman Trophy candidate if he returns

You never know what David Palmer is going to do. And ordinarily that is good for Alabama, bad for opponents. But now Alabama fans have to keep their fingers crossed for a few months. Although Palmer has said he intends to return to the Crimson Tide for his final season next year, the lure of professional football paychecks can be great, and Palmer could hardly be blamed if he wanted to take the money and run. Football is not a lifetime career for a

player, but a player of Palmer's caliber can probably earn a comfortable life in a very few years. The problem for all athletes is leg life. The legs don't last forever and a year lost is lost forever. Additionally, another season of college football risks injury, perhaps a career-ending injury.

But there are pluses for staying, too. David Palmer isn't going to win the Heisman Trophy this year, but he might as a senior. Ordinarily, a player does cer-

tain things as a junior to become a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate, then he has to hold on to that candidacy and win it in his senior season.

Palmer is not the only highly-regarded junior who has to make the decision as to whether to return or go pro. There's a quarterback in Knoxville who will have the same choice to make. But Palmer's choice should be easier than Tennessee quarterback Heath Shuler's. Shuler is expected to be the first player taken if he turns professional, while Palmer, 5-9, 165, isn't the type player the professional teams ordinarily draft high. Alabama has done just about everything as a team and has had all sorts of All-America players, coaches of the year, and various award winners of position trophies (Lombardi, etc.). But Alabama has never had a Heisman Trophy winner. Palmer is Bama's best bet.

Regardless of what Palmer does, he will go down in storied Crimson Tide football history as one of the best players ever. And one of the most amazing. The Deuce, as much a crowd favorite as any Tide player ever, seemingly plays with smoke and mirrors, almost impossible to hem up in the open field, almost never on the receiving end of a hard tackle. It's impossible to compare players from different eras and at different positions, but it's difficult to imagine that Alabama ever had a player as gifted as David Palmer.

Alabama Head Coach Gene Stallings was asked if he thinks Palmer is a Heisman Trophy candidate. "Well, sure I do," Stallings said. "He plays wherever we play him. He's a legitimate candidate for anything. He's really meant a lot to this football team and he's a legitimate candidate."

Although because of a shoulder injury Palmer was unable to perform at quarterback against Auburn (and says that he prefers not to play quarterback), he has been Bama's most effective man under center. With Jay Barker out, there is a chance that Palmer will see



A dream for Alabama followers and a nightmare for opposing defenders, junior David Palmer ranks among the best ever in crimson and white.

Spectrum-Southeast Photo

some quarterback playing time against Florida in the Southeastern Conference Championship Game in Birmingham's Legion Field December 4 and in the bowl game. And if he returns to Alabama next year, it will pay him to keep his hand in the quarterback position. the novelty of the wide receiver who comes to the rescue at quarterback attracts media attention, just as it will help him from a publicity standpoint if he plays baseball for the Crimson Tide this spring.

Stallings was asked earlier this year about Palmer not wanting to play quarterback. "I don't know," Stallings said. "I've never asked him. David is a team player. He'll do what's best for the team. But I suspect he's more comfortable at receiver because that's what he's played the most."

Any honest defensive coordinator would admit dreading preparation for an Alabama football team with Palmer at quarterback. A primary weakness of this year's Crimson Tide has been the offensive line not giving quarterbacks top protection. With Palmer at quarterback that liability becomes almost an advantage. Defensive linemen rushing through holes find themselves grasping at smoke in the form of a scrambling Palmer. That scenario turns every play into a punt return against defensive tackles, and that's no fair match.

But a defense can't play soft, either. With time to throw, Palmer is an exceptional passer. One of the many interesting things about watching Palmer practice is the specialty period of practice, when quarterbacks and wide receivers work together. After Palmer catches a pass, he turns and throws the ball back to a manager so the ball can be used for a subsequent throw. Invariably, the pass Palmer throws to the manager is better than the one that was thrown to Palmer.

Earlier this year Palmer was pressed into action at quarterback against Ole Miss because Barker had been injured. Palmer ran and passed the Tide to victory in Oxford. After the game, Mississippi Head Coach Billy Brewer said, "He is the best college football player in America."

Earlier he had played a major role in a comeback to tie Tennessee, including scoring the two-point conversion to tie the game on a quarterback keeper. Tennessee Coach Phil Fulmer said, "David Palmer is one of the best players in the country; not only as a runner, but he is a great receiver with great hands. His ability to play quarterback has paid dividends for them. I know it did for one play in our game with Alabama. He is a guy who will take two or three people out of your defensive scheme, and you'd

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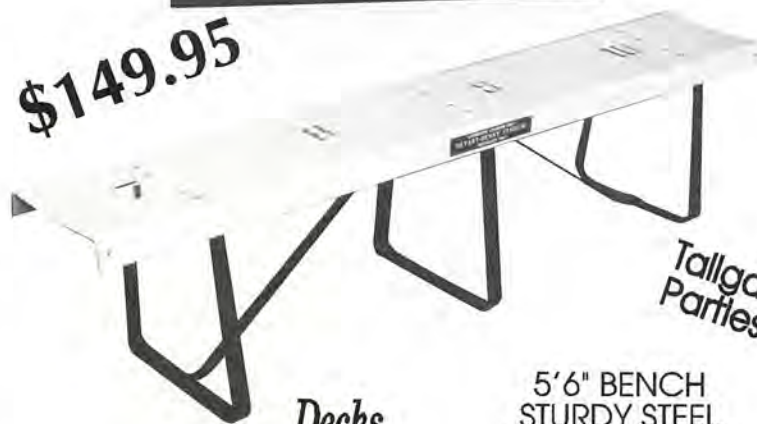


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better know where he is all the time because he can beat you in a heartbeat." And before he moved to quarterback, Palmer had three receptions for 44 yards in a last-minute, 82-yard drive to the final touchdown.

The beauty of Palmer at quarterback is that a primary job in Alabama's offense—getting the ball into David Palmer's hands—is handled by center Tobie Sheils.

It is unrealistic to expect the followers of opposing teams to be for Palmer, but they have to appreciate him, just as followers of Nebraska's opponents had to admire the skills of Johnny Rogers a couple of decades ago when Rogers was

running back kicks and catching passes and running reverses in leading the Cornhuskers to a national championship.

Palmer is a marvel as a receiver, in part because he quickly converts to running back or even passer from the flanker position. He's also one of the most dangerous kick return men ever to line up in college football. And even though he doesn't have great size, he has also proved to be a fine blocker. Alabama Secondary Coach Bill Oliver said Palmer would be a great defensive back, but he's just dreaming if he thinks he'll ever get Palmer on that side of the football.

Palmer's position coach, Woody McCorvey, points out that Palmer is a great catcher of bad passes, that he has an ability to adjust to the poorly thrown

pass and the confidence that if he can get to it, he can catch it. Palmer's first day on the Alabama practice field as a freshman in 1991 opened some eyes. He made catch after catch or poorly thrown balls. After the practice, Barker was asked about the freshman. Barker glanced over at Palmer, who was catching passes from a machine, shook his head and said, "Can you believe that little guy?"

Stallings got an early look at Palmer as a high school senior at Birmingham's Jackson-Olin, where he was named "Mr. Football" in the state by the Alabama Sports Writers Association. Later Stallings said, "They (the opponents) couldn't have gotten Palmer down if they had been playing touch football."

McCorvey said that Palmer is also an exceptional student of the game, watching a great deal of film so that he knows what is going on once the game is under way. Although Palmer doesn't have speed to match the true burners, he has an uncanny quickness and field awareness, making successful one-on-one coverage heretofore unseen.

Mississippi State Head Coach Jackie Sherrill said, "David Palmer, without a doubt, has the most awareness of a football player on the field I've ever seen. Palmer can do everything, and he has tremendous field vision. What sets him apart and amazes me is his vision and feel. It seems like he just feels where the defensive players are. As long as you have David Palmer, you have a chance to win."

Palmer is already in the Alabama record book and he's closing on some additional marks. He already has the Alabama record for receiving yardage in a season with 978 yards. He has 58 catches this year, another Bama record. He has 99 career receptions and if he returns for his senior season he will be an almost sure bet to be the all-time leader. (David Bailey set the current record of 132 from 1969-71.) Earlier this year he set the record for pass receiving yards in a game with 217 against Vanderbilt. He also has a chance to set new Tide marks in all-purpose yardage. And probably the only thing that has kept him from breaking most of the Bama kick return records already is that opponents are smart enough to punt high and short or out of bounds, not giving him a chance to run them back.

David Palmer is fun to watch. And that's partly because he is having fun. He loves to play the game. But, of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Opposing defensive players and coaches probably view him in a different light than Tide partisans.

It will be interesting to see how many more Saturdays he plays.

*BAMA, Inside The Crimson Tide/DECEMBER '93

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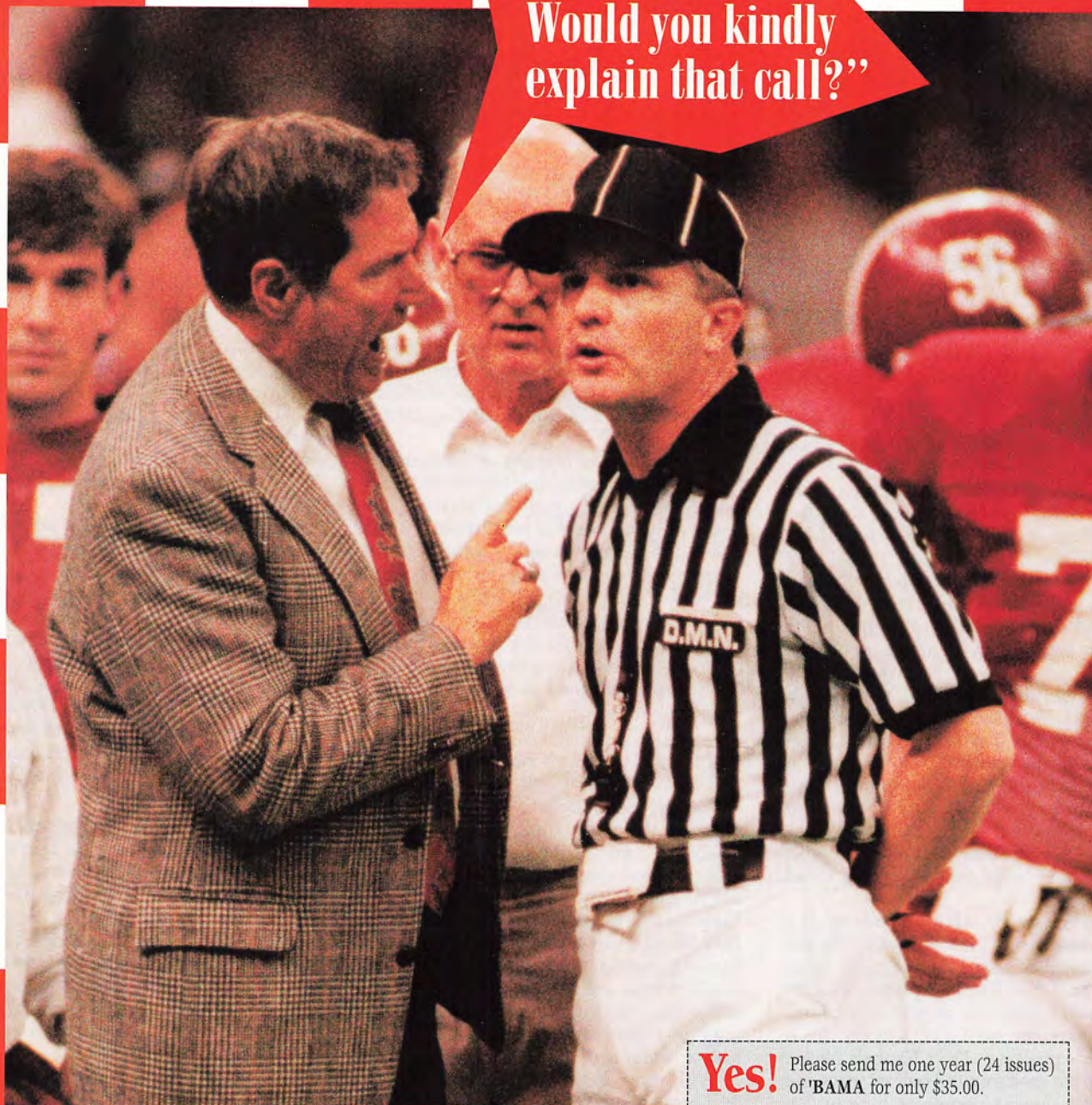
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In This Case: 'Better To Receive'

by John Barnes

Former quarterback scrub emerges in receiving corps

The Alabama football team is filled with success stories, players who have battled their way through adversity or position changes, still managing to rise to another level as athletes. Chad Key is such example.

Languishing in obscurity for two years as a down-the-line quarterback, the one-time walkon from Parrish has found his niche with the Tide offense.

After considerable discussion, Head Coach Gene Stallings and Assistant Coach Woody McCorvey, who works with Bama receivers, decided on a little experiment. When fall rosters were released in early August, Key found himself listed not as a quarterback, but as a split end. To say the move has paid off would be the understatement of the year.

Rapidly earning the reputation around the Southeastern Conference as a solid possession receiver with soft hands, Key's success at the position has surprised most everyone. Everyone that is, except Chad Key.

"Everyone keeps talking about what a pleasant surprise I am," he said. "People seemed shocked that I can actually catch the football. You know, I played four or five different positions in high school, including receiver, so I guess everyone is surprised except me. I'm a football player. Whether I'm catching the ball or throwing it, it really doesn't matter as long as I'm helping the team."

For McCorvey, the emergence of Key as a go-to man on third down situations has been a boost to Bama's offense. "Chad has a good football mind," said McCorvey. "Coming over from quarterback has really helped to speed up his understanding of the position. His knowledge of routes and his ability to recognize coverages comes from his experience at quarterback. Beyond that, he has good height (6-4) and soft hands. We have total confidence that we can throw the ball to Chad anywhere on the field." High praise for someone who, less than a year ago, had thoughts of giving up football.

For the 210-pound sophomore, the position change came at just the right time. "It was always a lifelong dream of mine to play football for The University of

Alabama," he said. "But to be perfectly honest, I really wasn't sure if I could take another year of standing on the sidelines, so it really was a blessing that they decided to move me."

Barring a rash of injuries at quarterback, it is hard to imagine that Key would have ever received any significant playing time at the position. He was redshirted in 1991 and last season Key's only playing time at quarterback was in a mop-up role toward the end of Alabama's 48-7 rout of South Carolina. With the arrival of freshman Freddie Kitchens and the impressive play of Brian Burgdorf in spring practice, Key seemed destined for a career on the scout team.

The tale of Key's position change is one of storybook proportions. He just happened to be in the right place at the right time. "Last summer, Chad and some of the other players were working out on the practice field," recalled McCorvey. "Coach Stallings just happened to be watching from his office. He noticed Chad catching the football and hauling in passes that a player with less height would not be able to catch. We casually discussed it in our next staff meeting and eventually decided to give him a look at wideout."

With the onset of two-a-days, Key immediately began to turn heads. His precise routes and ability to climb the ladder and catch high passes impressed not only McCorvey and Stallings, but his teammates as well. "No matter how much speed and quickness you have, a receiver has to be able to catch the football," said McCorvey. "Chad can catch the football, and that's what is important."

A number of factors weighed into the coaches' decision to move Key to split end, the most prominent of which was an off-season knee injury to Curtis Brown. In addition, nagging injuries to flanker Rick Brown, coupled with the graduation of Prince Wimbley, left the once-vaunted Tide receiver corps painfully thin in numbers. However, according to McCorvey, even without all the injuries, "We probably would have moved him anyway."

Key has responded to the challenge bet-

ter than anyone could have hoped. He has emerged as the Tide's third-leading receiver, the number one man in Alabama's backup corps (to split end Kevin Lee and flanker David Palmer). His best outing came in the Tide's 17-17 tie with Tennessee, where he caught four passes for 65 yards.

Key is rapidly becoming a very valuable member of the Bama offense. With Palmer working more and more at quarterback, or drawing double coverage at flanker, and Kevin Lee earning a reputation and one of the SEC's top speed merchants, Key has become a legitimate threat as a classic possession receiver. He has not dropped a pass all season. His only real miscue was a fumble while fighting for extra yardage in the second quarter of the LSU game. Not bad for a third-string quarterback.

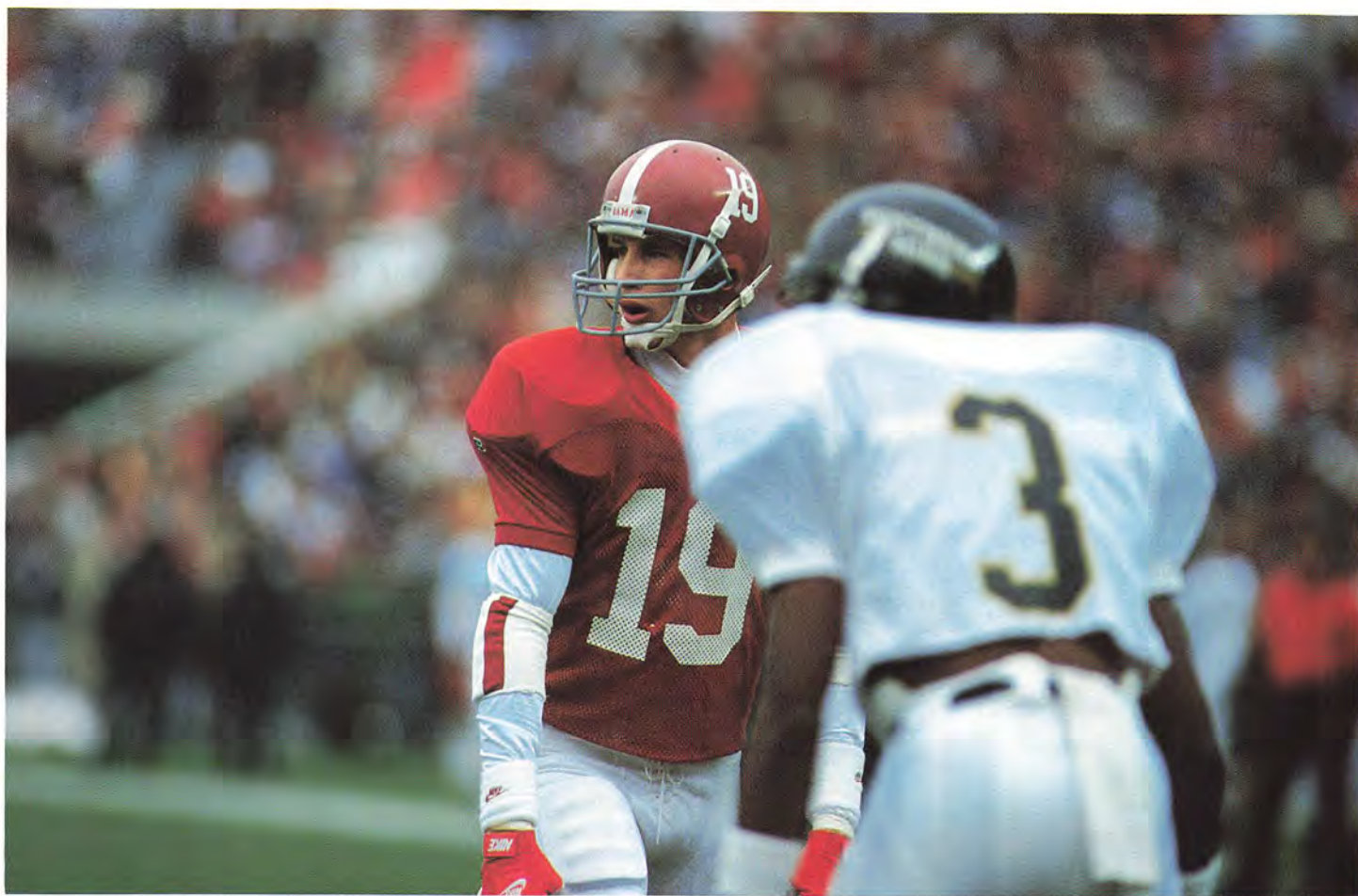
In addition to Key's happiness over the move to split end, he learned last spring that he would no longer have to pay his own way through school. A scholarship became available and Gene Stallings was more than happy to give it to Chad Key. The scholarship came before the position change, a pretty good indicator that the Bama coaches considered Key a valuable member of the team even as a backup quarterback.

"The day they told me I had a scholarship was very special," said Key. "Although I didn't play much, I worked as hard as anybody and felt like I really deserved it. I walked on at Alabama because I wanted to be a part of the tradition and fulfill a lifelong dream shared by every kid in the state. I could have gotten a scholarship to a Division IAA or II school. I could have played basketball. But there is no substitute for a quality education, not to mention winning a national championship, I have no regrets whatsoever."

Key wasn't just an average athlete or student at Walker. He was a four-year football letterman and was 6A all-state as a senior. In addition to starring in football, he was a four-year letterman in basketball. Additionally, he was Academic All-State and he is a pre-med major.

However, prior to Key's scholarship and subsequent position change, things were

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Chad Key (19) is an excellent athlete, but as a walk-on quarterback his future as an Alabama football player was limited. Now he's a valuable member of the Crimson Tide offense as a backup wide receiver. His height and his good hands make him particularly effective as a so-called possession receiver. And more than half of his receptions have been good for first downs.

Barry Fikes Photo

getting a little frustrating for the former Walker High standout. Like so many players in the Alabama system, Key had to make the adjustment from Big Man On Campus in high school to average Joe Freshman at The University. "I was red-shirted my freshman year," he said. "Although I got to live in the dorm and practice with the team, I felt something was lacking. The next season was not much better. I got to dress for games, but that was about it. I hated standing on the sideline, just watching. My competitive nature just couldn't stand it. But the coaches kept saying that my time would come." It has.

As is the case with the rest of the Bama team, Key is trying to cope with the Tide's first loss in more than two calendar years. Bama's 17-13 loss at the hands of the LSU Tigers has raised more than a few questions as to the effectiveness and effort of the Tide offense. Key has heard it all before. "Even when we were winning every

game, people still complained about the offense," he said. "Now that we've finally lost a game, it's not so different, maybe a little more intense. I hate it when people say we lost because of lack of effort because it's just not true. Everybody has to lose sometime. You can't go a million and zero."

As Key works himself further into the playing rotation at receiver, he has managed to compile some eye-opening statistics. He has caught at least one pass in seven of eight games. More than half of his receptions (53.9 per cent) have gone for first downs.

McCorvey agrees that Key gives the Tide offense an extra dimension. "Chad runs precise routes and manages to get open most of the time. He may not get the heavy coverage of a David Palmer or Kevin Lee, but he is covered. He doesn't have great speed, but it's adequate. I'm very pleased with the way he's performed because we were really in a bind with

Curtis getting hurt and with all of Rick's problems. We needed somebody to come along and fill the void. Chad certainly has done that. I have complete confidence that he can come on the field at any time and perform in any given situation. It means a lot to him and to us."

With two years of eligibility remaining, Key's goals are lofty, but not unattainable. "I would love to be the guy that everyone looks for to make the big catch," he said. "I would also like to win another national championship. Don't get me wrong, I'm very happy with my role on the team this year. It's more than I could have expected this time last year. But everyone wants to move ahead rather than stay where he is."

Chad Key is one of the bright spots for Alabama this year. His renaissance as an athlete is what college football is all about. If he continues to work hard and improve, the sky is the limit. He could very well become the "go to" man of the future in the Tide offense.

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Experience Makes The Difference

by Donald F. Staffo

Tide punter having better year second time around

Bryne Diehl has boomed some punts this year, including a 63-yarder against Arkansas, a 61-yarder against South Carolina, and a 59-yarder against Ole Miss. Had any of those come against Mississippi State, questions might have been raised. But the real answer to his performance, said Diehl, is experience, not helium or inflation levels.

Diehl has averaged about five yards more on each punt this year than he did last year as a sophomore, his first year to punt. In 1992 he averaged 38.8 yards per punt (but had his best one in Knoxville against Tennessee, a 58-yarder). Through most of the season he has ranked among the better punters in both the

Southeastern Conference and in the nation, making him one of the most improved punters in the country. Last year Diehl wasn't ranked nationally and was at the bottom of the SEC statistically.

"I think experience has a lot to do with it," Diehl said of his improvement. "Last year I was basically trying to not out-kick my coverage, because I didn't trust my hang time."

The most important statistic in punting is not distance. It is net punting, the distance of the punt less the distance of the return. And in that regard, Diehl has ranked even better than in mere distance. This year his kicks are not only traveling longer, they are going higher, allowing Alabama coverage men plenty of time to prevent runbacks. "My goal is to lead the conference in net punting," he said, pointing out that net punting is a team statistic, not an individual statistic. Nevertheless, the kick is an essential part of net punting success.

Despite his significant improvement, Diehl said he is not satisfied. "I think I can do a lot better," he said.

He also knows he could do a lot worse. In fact, he has to remember back only a year, to the SEC Championship Game against Florida, to remember the lowlight of his two-year career. After three quarters of good punts, including a 50-yarder, in the fourth quarter of a tight game, Diehl had three consecutive shanks—26 yards, 19 yards and 16 yards.

"It was just a lack of concentration on my part," Diehl said. "I let the cold and wind mess me up."

"Words can't explain how horrible I felt."

Speaking of words, Diehl got a few from Bama Head Coach Gene Stallings in that contest.

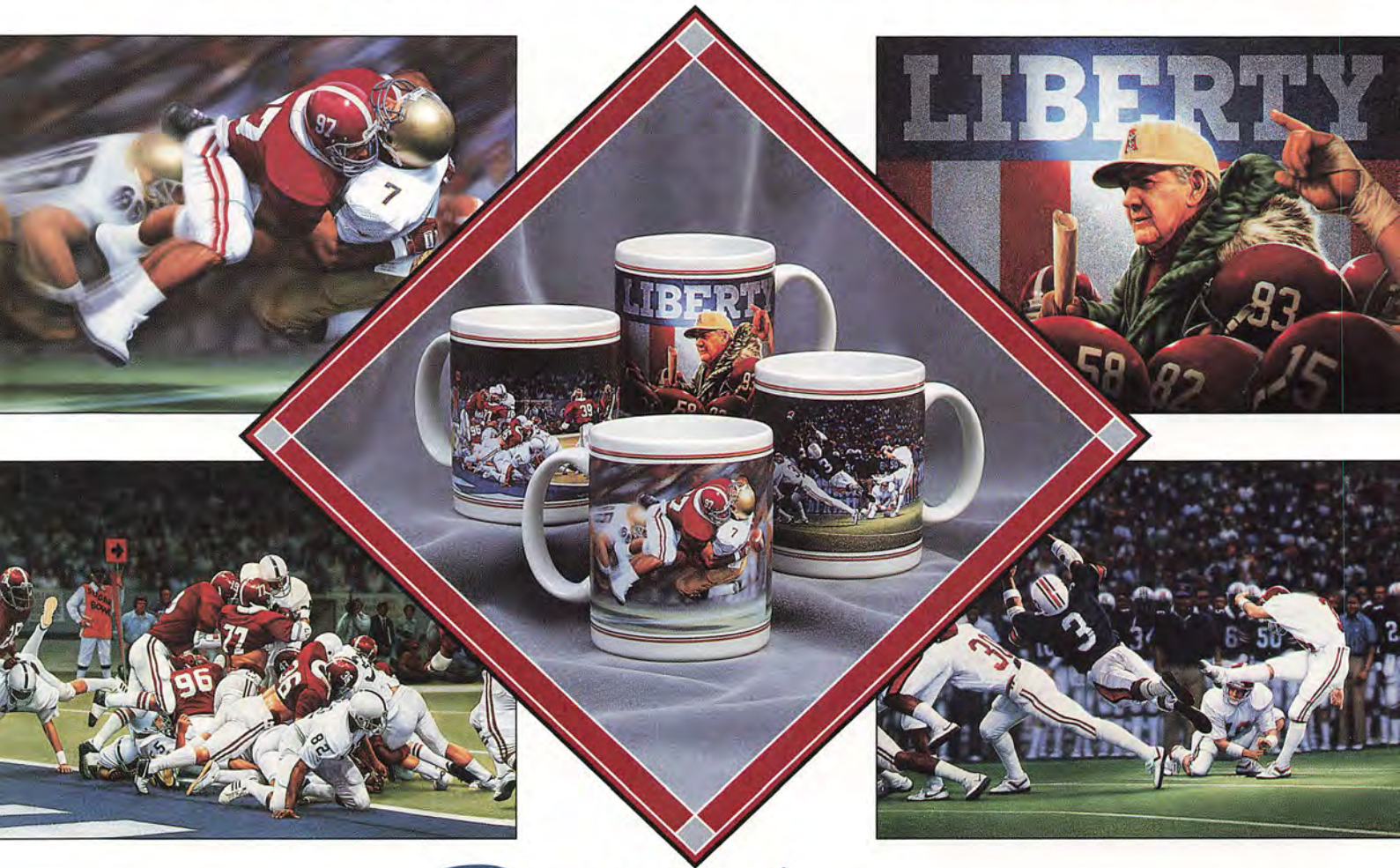
Stallings knows how critical the kicking game is to football success, one reason he made a change in his approach to staff as-

Tide punter Bryne Diehl has a very "live" leg, enabling him to boom punts. However, his goal is to have a good net punting average, meaning the punts must be high as well as long so Tide coverage men can prevent runbacks.

Barry Fikes Photo



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signments this year. When the NCAA eliminated a coaching position following the 1991 season, Alabama lost a volunteer coach who had been in charge of the overall kicking game. Last year Bama's kicking game was coached by committee, a different assistant coach in charge of each segment. This year the assistant coaches are still all involved in aspects of the kicking game, but Stallings put Danny Pearman, who also coaches Tide offensive tackles, in overall charge of special teams.

Diehl's punting average this year is about the same as it was his senior year at Oakman High School, where he averaged 43.3 yards per punt. But he is not the same punter. He had to change his technique when he got to college to get his kicks off quicker. In high school he could make a three-step punt, or even a four-step on occasion.

Against bigger, faster college players Diehl reduced his approach to a two-step technique, then to a one-and-a-half step form as a sophomore. This year he is back to a three-step approach, but it is a much quicker three steps. "I'm getting my punts off quicker now with three steps than I could before with one and a half steps, and I'm getting more power," Diehl said. "The difference is basically practice and better technique. And confidence helps a lot, too."

The improvement is the result of kicking throughout the summer with a gradual build-up to about 75 punts a day in late July. During the season Diehl stays fine-tuned by punting about 40 times each practice, about once every three minutes. There is also a weight room regiment for kickers. He said his leg does not get tired from the punting, that it has gotten stronger, and the results are evident on Saturdays.

The punt Diehl put into orbit against the Razorbacks and which was returned only five yards may have been his longest, but it was a punt of only about half that distance that Diehl thinks was his most effective of the year. "The 63-yard punt had good hang time which allowed us to get good coverage," he said. "However, my best punt was against Mississippi, and it only went 35 yards. But we downed the ball on the one-yard line, which meant they had to go 99 yards for a touchdown." The remarkable aspect of that punt against the Rebels was that snapper Matthew Pine raced downfield and made an over-the-shoulder catch of the football to keep it from going into the end zone.

Unfortunately, that punt against Ole Miss was the exception rather than the rule for Diehl on short punts this year.

Punting the opponents inside their 20-yard lines is an area where Diehl has regressed this season.

"Last year when punting from midfield I had a real good percentage putting the ball inside the 20," Diehl said. "But this year the balls seems to be flying on me and going into the end zone for touchbacks." After a touchback, the opponent starts at the 20, so a punt from midfield that is downed at the five-yard line, 45 yards, is actually 15 yards better than one that goes 50 yards and into the end zone. However, that yardage is not deducted from net punting.

"Last year from midfield Bryne would take a full swing and he wasn't reaching the end zone," Pearman said. "This year, instead of pooch-kicking it high, he sometimes gets too much foot into it and, therefore, too much distance."

Field position determines the type of punt required, be it a coffin corner kick (one that goes out of bounds near the opponent's end zone) or a long, high punt that sends the punt return man back-pedaling.

While statistics-watchers check the distance, a critical element in successful punting is hang time, the amount of time the football stays in the air to allow coverage. Coverage men leave the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball, and it usually takes a little over a second from the time of the snap to get the ball away. Football players in full gear (and with blockers hampering them) can expect to take about five seconds to cover 40 yards, so it is obvious that hang time needs to exceed four seconds to allow good coverage of an average punt.

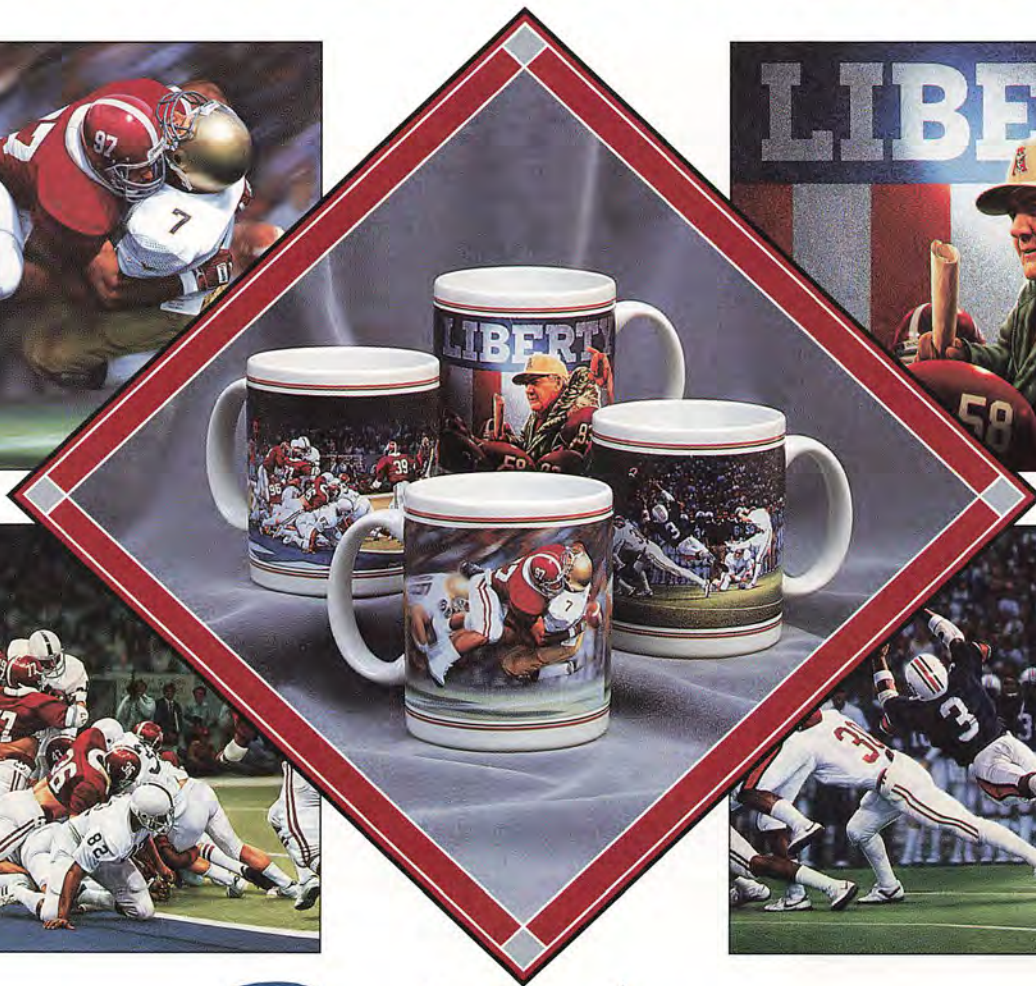
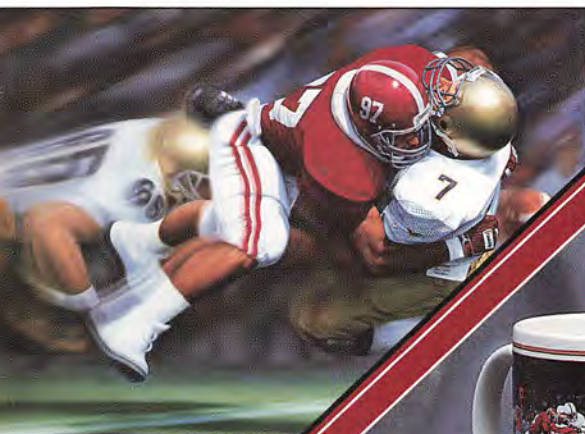
"Where we are on the field has a lot to do with the amount of hang time we need," Pearman said. "Bryne has always had a live leg, and when he gets a hold of it he can really boom it. We're working with him to not always try to kick it so far, but to keep his head down and follow through, almost like a golf swing. It's not so much that you try to kill it as much as you make smooth and even contact with the ball."

Pearman and Diehl have worked on improving the punter's hang time, and the results have been positive this year. Along with the extra distance he is achieving, his hang time has improved from an average of 4.0 seconds last year to 4.3 this year, including an incredible 4.9 hang time on the 63-yarder against Arkansas.

In terms of punting technique, Diehl said the biggest problem for a kicker is usually the drop, the release of the ball before he punts it. "It may seem to be easy, but if I don't drop the ball right I have to adjust my whole body in a split second," Diehl said. "Punting is actually a hard job with timing being very important. I have

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signments this year. When the NCAA eliminated a coaching position following the 1991 season, Alabama lost a volunteer coach who had been in charge of the overall kicking game. Last year Bama's kicking game was coached by committee, a different assistant coach in charge of each segment. This year the assistant coaches are still all involved in aspects of the kicking game, but Stallings put Danny Pearman, who also coaches Tide offensive tackles, in overall charge of special teams.

Diehl's punting average this year is about the same as it was his senior year at Oakman High School, where he averaged 43.3 yards per punt. But he is not the same punter. He had to change his technique when he got to college to get his kicks off quicker. In high school he could make a three-step punt, or even a four-step on occasion.

Against bigger, faster college players Diehl reduced his approach to a two-step technique, then to a one-and-a-half step form as a sophomore. This year he is back to a three-step approach, but it is a much quicker three steps. "I'm getting my punts off quicker now with three steps than I could before with one and a half steps, and I'm getting more power," Diehl said. "The difference is basically practice and better technique. And confidence helps a lot, too."

The improvement is the result of kicking throughout the summer with a gradual build-up to about 75 punts a day in late July. During the season Diehl stays fine-tuned by punting about 40 times each practice, about once every three minutes. There is also a weight room regiment for kickers. He said his leg does not get tired from the punting, that it has gotten stronger, and the results are evident on Saturdays.

The punt Diehl put into orbit against the Razorbacks and which was returned only five yards may have been his longest, but it was a punt of only about half that distance that Diehl thinks was his most effective of the year. "The 63-yard punt had good hang time which allowed us to get good coverage," he said. "However, my best punt was against Mississippi, and it only went 35 yards. But we downed the ball on the one-yard line, which meant they had to go 99 yards for a touchdown." The remarkable aspect of that punt against the Rebels was that snapper Matthew Pine raced downfield and made an over-the-shoulder catch of the football to keep it from going into the end zone.

Unfortunately, that punt against Ole Miss was the exception rather than the rule for Diehl on short punts this year.

Punting the opponents inside their 20-yard lines is an area where Diehl has regressed this season.

"Last year when punting from midfield I had a real good percentage putting the ball inside the 20," Diehl said. "But this year the balls seems to be flying on me and going into the end zone for touchbacks." After a touchback, the opponent starts at the 20, so a punt from midfield that is downed at the five-yard line, 45 yards, is actually 15 yards better than one that goes 50 yards and into the end zone. However, that yardage is not deducted from net punting.

"Last year from midfield Bryne would take a full swing and he wasn't reaching the end zone," Pearman said. "This year, instead of pooch-kicking it high, he sometimes gets too much foot into it and, therefore, too much distance."

Field position determines the type of punt required, be it a coffin corner kick (one that goes out of bounds near the opponent's end zone) or a long, high punt that sends the punt return man back-pedaling.

While statistics-watchers check the distance, a critical element in successful punting is hang time, the amount of time the football stays in the air to allow coverage. Coverage men leave the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball, and it usually takes a little over a second from the time of the snap to get the ball away. Football players in full gear (and with blockers hampering them) can expect to take about five seconds to cover 40 yards, so it is obvious that hang time needs to exceed four seconds to allow good coverage of an average punt.

"Where we are on the field has a lot to do with the amount of hang time we need," Pearman said. "Bryne has always had a live leg, and when he gets a hold of it he can really boom it. We're working with him to not always try to kick it so far, but to keep his head down and follow through, almost like a golf swing. It's not so much that you try to kill it as much as you make smooth and even contact with the ball."

Pearman and Diehl have worked on improving the punter's hang time, and the results have been positive this year. Along with the extra distance he is achieving, his hang time has improved from an average of 4.0 seconds last year to 4.3 this year, including an incredible 4.9 hang time on the 63-yarder against Arkansas.

In terms of punting technique, Diehl said the biggest problem for a kicker is usually the drop, the release of the ball before he punts it. "It may seem to be easy, but if I don't drop the ball right I have to adjust my whole body in a split second," Diehl said. "Punting is actually a hard job with timing being very important. I have

'BAMA, Inside The Crimson Tide/DECEMBER '93

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an explosion point when my leg is moving the fastest, and that's when I want my foot contacting the ball." For him a drop of two to two-and-a-half feet produces best results.

Diehl believes that kicking is a natural instinct, something that cannot be taught. "I think you have to have a feel for it," he said. "I think you can teach maybe one out of 100 people to be kickers."

Diehl walked on at Alabama in 1990, but didn't get his first opportunity to punt until last year. While statistically he did not have an exceptional first campaign, his work in the national championship season paid off for him about two weeks prior to the start of this year.

"Coach Stallings came up to me at practice and told me I was going to be put on scholarship," he said. "Then I felt like all my hard work had finally paid off. My parents (Larry and Emily) were tickled to death, and I think it took a little pressure off me because I felt they had already paid enough for me to go to school."

Diehl, 6-3, 215, was an exceptional high school athlete, a quarterback on offense and linebacker on defense as well as his

football team's punter. As a senior he completed 46 of 79 passes for 915 yards and 15 touchdowns and led Oakman to its first undefeated regular season in 50 years. He was also a star basketball player (25 points and 14 rebounds per game) and outstanding baseball player (.531 average, 13 home runs, and 7-0 pitching record). He was all-county in all three sports (including quarterback, linebacker and punter in football) and 1A all-state punter.

"I loved playing quarterback and playing defense and miss it a lot," he said, "but there are some things you have to give up."

However, Diehl has had occasion to draw on his all-around football skills to help the Tide. Last year against Southern Mississippi from punt formation, Diehl read the defense, made eye contact with Tommy Johnson, and instead of kicking burned the Golden Eagles with a 73-yard touchdown pass, a play Diehl calls his biggest individual thrill.

While that play was called by Tide coaches, Diehl has also had success making up his own plays. Diehl said the Tide does not have any fake punt set plays for him this year, "but I wish we did. I'm

three-for-three so far, but if I don't make it it's my fault, and I'll take the blame."

This year he's had two on-his-own running plays, and both have been successful. Against Arkansas, he saw his punt attempt might be blocked, so he tucked the ball under his arm and ran 17 yards for a first down, keeping a touchdown drive alive. In the unfortunate loss to LSU, Diehl had the biggest running play of the day for Bama, taking advantage of the LSU punt rush to go outside and run 43 yards, a play that might have gone for a touchdown had it not caught Diehl's teammates by surprise as much as it did the LSU defenders.

Following a punt, Diehl becomes a defender, the safetyman, last man between the punt return man and the goalline. Thus far in his Alabama career he said he has had eight opportunities to make tackles, and has been successful on seven of them. The one that got away was in the Sugar Bowl, a Miami touchdown return.

Diehl, a criminal justice major, has one more year at Alabama. He still has some punts to make this season, but if he improves as much next year as he did this year, it could be a great 1994 for him and Bama.

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Antonio Langham:

He May Be Best Ever Cornerback

by Kirk McNair

He's set records and won games as big play artist

Preseason football practices are anything but fun, but in early Alabama football workouts last fall there was one period each day that was more than entertaining. It was fascinating. The drill was one-on-one passing, and each day there were several confrontations between one of the all-time finest offensive players, David Palmer, against one of the all-time best defensive players, Antonio Langham.

Athletes of that caliber don't need any extra motivation when going head-to-head, but Alabama Head Coach Gene Stallings gave the workout a little boost each day. "I'm betting on Palmer today," he'd tell the squad some days. Other days, "My money's on Langham today."

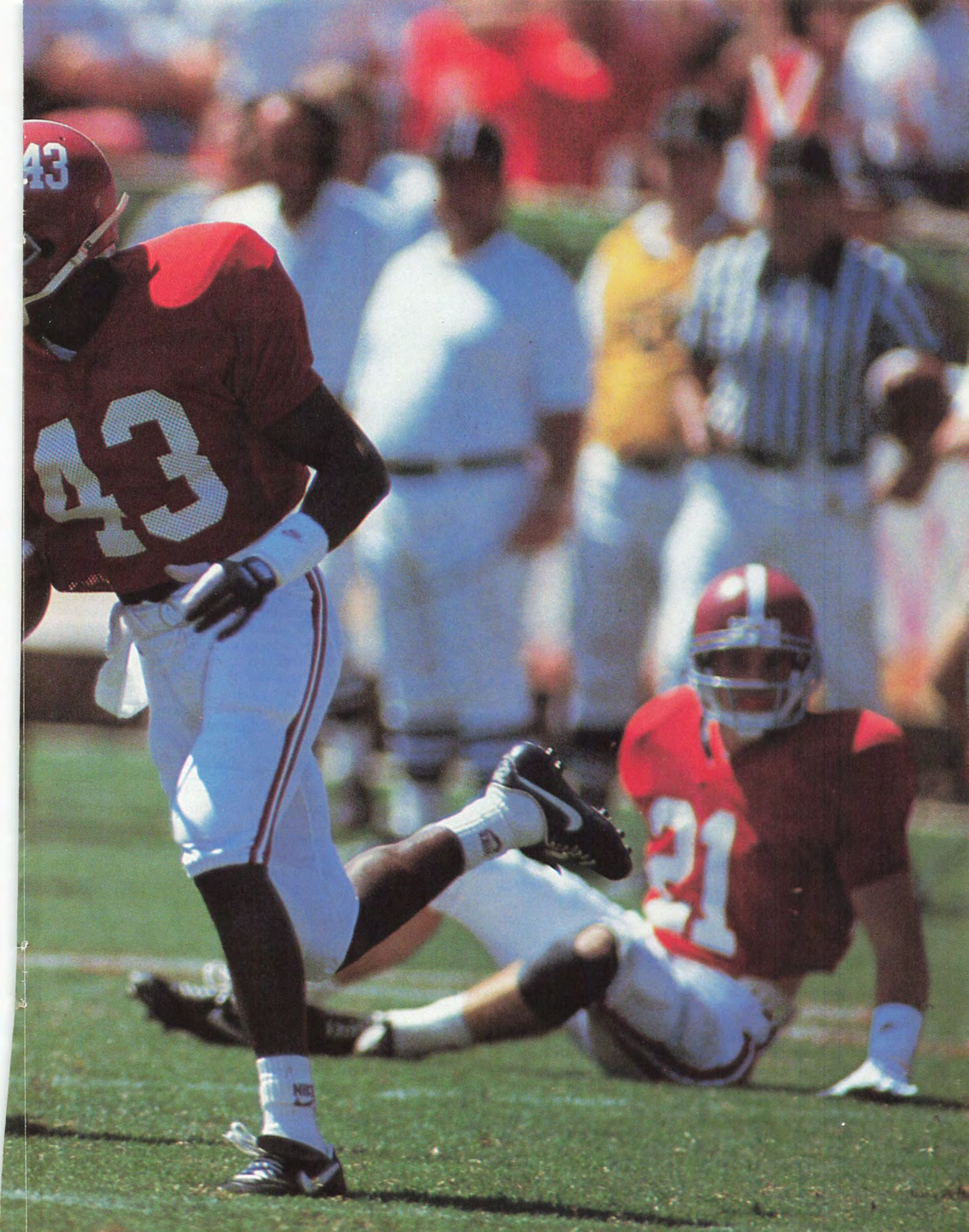
As might be expected, each day was about a standoff, Palmer sometimes making the incredible catch despite Langham's best efforts, Langham sometimes winning the battle. The two broke about even for the year, but the big winners were those who got to view it.

The Antonio Langham era of Alabama football is drawing to a close, but what a time it has been. And while it has been sensational for Crimson Tide followers, it has also been a ball for Langham. "I had two dreams," Langham said. "The first part of it was fulfilled when I signed a scholarship with The University of Alabama. The second was to be able to come here and do well academically and on the football field. I wanted to do my part to help the Alabama football team win games."

Antonio Langham didn't just tie the Alabama career record for interceptions with this theft against Arkansas. He turned it into a dramatic 43-yard touchdown return.

Barry Fikes Photo







Antonio Langham believes the training he has received at Alabama will help him in a professional football career. But of more importance to the senior cornerback is to have been a part of Tide tradition.

Barry Fikes Photo

He has done that. Certain schools get designations: Penn State is Linebacker University, Southern Cal known for its tailbacks, etc. Alabama has had great football players at every position in its storied history. But it may be there was never a better cornerback than Antonio Langham.

Alabama's current coaching staff signed

Langham, but he was actually recruited by the previous staff, headed by Bill Curry. And it wasn't a tough recruiting battle, even though Langham was an all-state player who helped Hazlewood of Town Creek to back-to-back state titles. He had 15 interceptions his senior year, including a state record four in the championship game.

"Everyone knew I was going to Alabama if I was offered," he said. Langham didn't grow up an Alabama fan, but when the Town Creek connection got started, including his cousins, he began to follow the Tide.

Langham said that when the new staff took over at Alabama, they followed up and offered him a scholarship.

He wanted to help Alabama win games? How about the critical three games that led up to last year's national championship Sugar Bowl contest. Against Mississippi State he blocked a punt and scored a touchdown as the Tide weathered a tough storm in Starkville. Against Auburn he broke open a scoreless game with an interception and 61-yard run for a touchdown. And in the Southeastern Conference Championship Game, he broke a late tie with an interception and 27-yard return for the winning touchdown.

It is almost a trick play when an opposing quarterback throws a pass in Langham's direction. He has precious few opportunities for interceptions these days. Nevertheless, he ranks among the nation's leaders this year, and he has entered the record books. Through nine games this year he had seven pickoffs and a school record 19 career interceptions, one short of the SEC record. His 17th career interception broke the Alabama record (previously held by all-stars Harry Gilmer, Jeremiah Castille and John Mangum) and came in dramatic fashion, a 44-yard return for a touchdown against Arkansas.

Although Langham had plenty of time to think about the record as he weaved his way across the field, then down through traffic to the end zone against Arkansas, he said the record didn't cross his mind. "I caught the ball, and then all I was thinking about was getting as much as I could," Langham said. "I didn't think about it until I got to the sidelines and Coach Stallings congratulated me on setting the record."

All-star awards will begin to be announced in upcoming days, and Antonio Langham is a lock for all of them. He will certainly be unanimous All-SEC, and could be a unanimous choice for All-America. He is the leading candidate to win the Jim Thorpe Award, presented to the nation's top defensive back.

And next year, Langham will be playing football on Sundays.

Alabama is fortunate that Langham did not elect to turn professional a year ago. One professional scout visiting an

Alabama game last fall said that if Langham did opt for the draft, "He'll be the first defensive back taken." Surprisingly, Langham said it wasn't a difficult decision to make to stay for his senior year.

"There may have been a little pressure on me when we got back from New Orleans (following the Sugar Bowl), and I listened to a lot of people with advice," he said. "But what I wanted to do was stay at Alabama and play my last year of football and get closer to my degree.

"And I have no regrets."

Some of those from whom he took advice are cousins. Langham has had three of them in professional football—brothers Chris, Kerry and Clyde Goode. "I probably had an advantage because I could talk to them," Langham said. "One of them (Chris) has been playing for awhile, but the other two didn't play as long. I know that a career might not last long. You have to be ready to do something else if it doesn't."

"I probably appreciate Antonio more and more each day, the closer I get to losing him," said Bill Oliver, the Tide's secondary coach. "He's the best I've ever coached."

Oliver has a special appreciation for the way in which Langham approached his senior season. "Sometimes when a guy knows he's going to have an opportunity to play professional football, he starts to play the game a little more cautiously," Oliver said. "He doesn't want to get hurt. Antonio knows he's a next level prospect. And the way he has played this year has let the pros know how good he is going to be."

While Langham could pick his college, he will have no choice of the National Football League team that selects him. And that doesn't bother him. "I like to watch the Cowboys, but I don't have a preference for the team I play for," he said.

Bobby Marks, a former Alabama coach who is now a scout for the Dallas Cowboys, is aware that Langham is one of college football's top players. And he's aware of something else, too. "He won't be there when Dallas picks," Marks said. "He'll definitely go in the first round, but it depends on who is picking as to what number. He could go really high. He ought to be one of the top five or 10 guys picked."

Marks said Langham is known by the pro scouts for his talent, but for more than that. "He's a complete player, a good kid, a good leader, and he's been coached well," Marks said. "He's been a good player in a good program and it's really helped him."

Marks said that Langham "is not extra big, but he's tall (6-1) and rangy. He's a tough guy. He doesn't weigh but 180, but he's got some toughness. But the thing he really does is cover. He can back pedal and change direction as fast as anyone I've seen in a long time. And when he reverses, and comes up, I can't think of anyone I've seen more explosive.

"He's technically as good as any I've seen at Alabama, including (Mike)

Washington, (Don) McNeal, and (Jeremiah) Castille. He does things in a more fluid manner. He's a real graceful guy. He's already playing at the next level. Ordinarily, it takes a little while for these guys to come in and start at corner. But he's the kind of guy, because he can cover, who can go in and help a team immediately."

Anyone who has watched an NFL game has probably noticed that corner-

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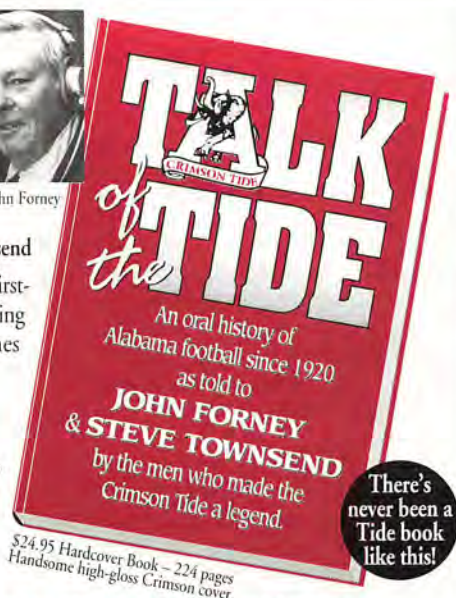


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backs on the whole are not great tacklers. Stallings, who coached the Dallas Cowboys secondary for a number of years, said, "They don't pay those guys to tackle. They pay them to cover."

Marks agrees that coverage ability comes first. But, he said, "Pro teams want guys who can tackle, and that's a real bonus that Antonio can. Coverage comes first because the guys they are going against can beat you so fast. But if he catches it, you need a guy who can tackle. And Antonio has fine tackling ability, which will up his ante, too. He's not afraid to come up and tackle, which he's done against option teams."

Langham couldn't have a bigger booster than his position coach, Bill Oliver. "Everything about him is special," Oliver said. "There aren't many people in this world who you can't find a flaw of some kind, but everything about Antonio is extremely high: his outlook, his enthusiasm to try to excel in everything, to be a perfectionist. He's the type who never misses a class and who works as hard as he can on the football field."

"And on top of all that, he's having a good time. There's no way the people who are getting so much enjoyment out of watching him play can imagine how much fun he's having playing."

"He is a pleasure to coach. He's even-tempered, has a great personality, a great sense of humor."

Oliver is also impressed with the maturity Langham has shown in becoming a great player. "Antonio prepares meticulously for every game," Oliver said.

"When we have our scouting meetings, he's taking notes. And those notes go back with him to the dorm, and he studies them at night. He checks all the little things, the things that make the difference between adequate and excellent."

"He plays every game so intelligently. There are players who play very well, but they play every down like the first one. Antonio is one of those players who is aware of the score and the time and the down and distance, and he is aware that different situations call for him to be prepared for different things. Another key to how much football means to him is how much it hurts him when things don't go well."

"There's no question that he's blessed with great natural talent, but he has concentrated on making himself be the best player possible. It's not enough to be able to do it. A player has to know what to do, and Antonio does. And he executes on every play."

"He has amazed me with some of the things he has done, things that just don't seem possible. Against Tulane a couple of years ago he was beaten on a play; the receiver had a tremendous lead on him. But he turned around and just outran the football to break up the pass. This year against South Carolina we had a 10-point lead. Our safety missed an assignment and Antonio saw it out of the corner of his eye. He covered about 25 yards while the ball was in the air and broke up the pass. A play like that can make the difference in winning and losing, and it takes not only a player with special athletic skills, but also a player with great perception to make a play like that."

"Everyone thinks of Antonio as a great defensive back because of his interceptions, but he also takes a lot of pride in playing against the running game and he is really solid in that respect."

"Naturally, not too many teams are going to pick on Antonio, so he hasn't had many opportunities this year. We've tried to move him around so that maybe we'd catch them throwing at him." Oliver said that numerous things go into determining where Langham will line up on a given play, including the other team's best receiver and the tendencies of the opponent to do certain things in certain situations."

Langham considers it an honor to have played at Alabama. "The thing I think about is the great football tradition we have here," he said. "I know it goes back a long way and that Coach (Paul) Bryant really established it, and other players and coaches want to be a part of continuing that tradition. It means a lot to me to pull on that red and white and go out there and perform in front of thousands of people who love The University."

He said that he has a lot to be thankful for, "To God for my talent and for my teammates and coaches. It wouldn't have been possible without them."

As much as his coaches admire him, Langham has nothing but praise for the Alabama coaching staff. "We have great coaches," he said. "You couldn't ask for better. Coach Oliver has worked with me since I was a freshman and made me whatever I am today."

Langham recognizes that he will go to



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professional football and that "It's as different from college football as college football is from high school football. But even though it will be like starting over

in a lot of respects, I think that a lot of the things I have learned here will help me later."

Even though Langham has individual

records and honors, he said the greatest memory of his time at Alabama will be the 1992 national championship, "because football is a team game."

But he doesn't discount the enjoyment he has taken in establishing records. "I don't think about it after it's done unless someone asks me, but records are nice," Langham said. "One record I don't have is the Alabama record for interceptions in a season. Coach Ingram (Alabama Athletics Director Hootie Ingram) has that record, and he's always telling me he hopes I break it, which tells you a lot about what a good person he is. I think that will help me to feel the same way when someone comes along to break my records, too. One thing I do think about is what a great job Coach Ingram must have done to get 10 interceptions in a season, because football was a lot different when he played, players playing offense and defense and not nearly as much passing."

When Langham came to Alabama, he hoped to have a chance to play offense. He had been a very good wide receiver in high school. "They told me they'd give me a chance on offense," Langham said. "I think I ran a couple of routes one day. But we just had four defensive backs in the group of freshmen I came in with, so I was pretty much on defense from day one. And I also knew from day one that I would be a cornerback."

"So, I haven't lined up on the offensive side of the ball since I've been here," he said, and smiled. "But I like to think I've played a lot of offense."

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Team, Team, Team Is Most Important

by Andrew Varble II

The concept of hard work for good of team seems to have taken hold

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Head coach Jonty Skinner can't say the word enough when talking about the current edition of the Alabama swimming and diving program.

"To be successful this season," Skinner said, "this group is going to have to sit down and decide what their team goals for the season are and then dedicate 110 per cent of themselves to achieving those goals."

Alabama returns much of the talent that took the women's squad to a 10th place finish and the men to an 18th place finish at

the NCAA Swimming and Diving Championships last year, but depth is in short supply.

"Our problem is with depth and with the youth of this squad," Skinner said. "We need athletes, especially on the men's side, to step up and contribute in ways that we've never asked them to before. Underclassmen are going to have to shoulder more of the burden than ever before. Everyone is going to have to pull his weight."

The goals the squad has set include returning to the NCAA top 10 for the men and maintaining their place in the top 10 and moving up for the women. On a conference level, both squads are looking to move up in the team standings and perhaps come away from the meet with a couple of individual SEC titles.

Tide swimmers agree that being a team is instrumental to Alabama's success, and no one understands that with more clarity than those who grew up around the Bama tradition.

Four of the Crimson Tide's returning All-Americans are in-state products, and all four

have a vital role to play in Alabama's drive to improve on last year's placings on the conference and national levels. Amy DeVasher is a native Tuscaloosan, Travis Myers hails from Northport, Katherine Rhodes calls Huntsville home, and Georgia Sewell is a native of Birmingham.

Katherine Rhodes knows the importance of team, even in a sport like swimming and diving, which is essentially an individual endeavor.

"My first year, everyone was swimming for herself," Rhodes said. "We were all worried about making individual NCAA cuts and our own races at the SEC Championships. As it turned out, nobody swam very well at all."

"This past year, all we worried about was the team. We swam fast to make the NCAA

Among Alabama's returning All-America performers for the 1993-94 swimming and diving team are (left to right) Georgia Sewell of Birmingham, Travis Myers of Northport, Katherine Rhodes of Huntsville and Amy DeVasher of Tuscaloosa.

Barry Fikes Photo



relay cuts so that we could get more women to the meet. That was our goal—team—and it paid off. We made it back into the top 10 at the NCAA and we did it together, everyone contributing."

Rhodes has been known to fill in all over the Tide's line-up sheet. Primarily though, she is a breaststroker, a world-ranked one. Based on her swims this summer, Rhodes is ranked 41st in the world in the 200 breaststroke. Rhodes also holds part of the schools 200 and 400 medley relay records and was part of the Tide's move back into the top 10 last season. Rhodes' teammates named her co-captain of this year's squad. For the past two seasons Skinner has honored her with the team's Coach's Award, signifying the athlete who, in the coaches' eyes, has contributed heavily not just in the points department, but by providing leadership in and out of the pool. This season Alabama will look to her for her prowess in the breaststroke events, on the medley relay teams and for leadership.

Travis Myers and Georgia Sewell both return for their senior years looking to make a mark in their last season wearing the Crimson and White.

"I came to Alabama because of the tradition," Myers said. "I was raised on Alabama, I grew up watching the swimmers. I wanted to swim with Jon Olsen and I heard that Jonty was coming back to coach. I think he's one of the greatest coaches in the country. All those things had me excited about swimming for Alabama."

Myers said that this year's men's squad is coming together in a way that makes him excited all over again.

"We had a meeting at the beginning of the year and talked about everything and got everything out in the open," Myers said. "The past few years, we've been more out for our-

selves than the team, I don't think that's a problem this year; everyone's working really hard and working for each other. The difference this year is that everyone's getting behind the team and cheering; we're not so much out for ourselves this year, I like it this way a lot. This is what I thought it would be like from day one. I'm happy that it's here now."

In addition to his All-America accolades, Myers lays claim to the 1992 SEC 100 breaststroke title, a share of the school 200 freestyle relay record and All-SEC honors. For the last two years, he has scored individual points at the NCAA Championships and he has been named Alabama's Most Valuable Performer each of those years. His presence will mean a generous flow of points in the breaststroke and sprint freestyle events and a shot at an individual SEC title in the 100 breaststroke.

Sewell has made a steady contribution since her freshman season. Sewell was Alabama's only individual qualifier for the NCAA Championships in 1992, turning in a 100 butterfly performance that would earn her the school record in that event. Sewell was also part of the Tide's resurgence last season, one that led Alabama back into the top 10 at the NCAA Championships for the first time since 1986. Sewell holds part of the school record in the 200 and 400 medley relays and she is the first Tide woman to swim the 100 butterfly in under 55 seconds. Sewell will continue in her role on the Tide's medley relays and should supply big points in the 100 butterfly.

"This is a great way to swim," Sewell said. "We're all out for each other, trying to swim fast for the team. Any goals that we have for ourselves revolve around helping the team to be better, and it is getting better, every day."

The youngest member of the Tide's

Alabama All-America crew is sophomore Amy DeVasher. Much like Myers, DeVasher grew up within the walls of the Alabama Aquatic Center watching Alabama swimmers.

"I use to watch them at the dual meets," DeVasher remembers. "They'd come out in their red sweats and they'd sit together as a team and all I could think of is that I wanted to be part of that, I wanted to be part of a team. At my first dual meet, when I was wearing the red sweats and sitting with the team, it was the greatest thing, better than I'd ever imagined."

In addition to the four Alabamians, the Crimson Tide returns eight other All-Americans from last season and all of them look to make a substantial contribution to Alabama's 1993-94 success.

Sophomore Stacy Potter turned in what is arguably the greatest freshman year in Tide history and she's back looking to make year two even better. In 1993, the Americus, Georgia, native broke two individual school records, the 100 backstroke and 100 butterfly, tied Kim Nicholson for the 50 freestyle record, and swam on three school record breaking relays, the 200 and 400 medley relays and the 200 freestyle. In addition, she finished in both the 100 backstroke and 100 butterfly at the SEC and NCAA Championships. This past summer, Potter swam to a world ranking of 21st in the 100 butterfly. This season Alabama's 1993 women's MVP has a chance at further rewriting of the Alabama record book and swimming to even better placings at the SEC and NCAA Championships.

On the men's side, Alabama had two freshman sensations in 1993. Alex Voris and Russell McDowell both stepped up and scored for the Tide at the SEC Championships and both earned trips to



Return of a Dynasty

by

Bill Shipley

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the NCAA Championships. Voris leaped onto the Tide's All-Time Top 10 list in the 100 and 200 freestyle while finaling at the SEC Championships and earning a spot on Alabama's NCAA squad. McDowell surprised many people when he dropped two and a half seconds in the 200 butterfly, finaling at the SEC Championships and earning an individual berth to the NAAs and earning All-America honors as part of the Tide's fourth place 200 medley relay. This past summer, McDowell swam well enough in the 100 butterfly to earn a world ranking of 28th.

In the experience department Alabama's men will look to NCAA veterans Stavros Michaelides, Dustin McDaniels and David Strassburg. Along with Myers, this trio broke the school record in the 200 freestyle relay to win the Tide's dual meet against Auburn last season. All three are returning All-Americans and all three will be essential to Alabama's success this season. Michaelides is looking to make his fourth trip to the NCAA Championships and to earn All-America honors for the fourth straight year. He is also looking to become only the second man in Tide history to break 20 seconds in the 50 freestyle (former Tide standout Jon Olsen's 19.74 was the first). The senior has been a mainstay on Alabama's relays for the past three years and will be relied on heavily in that area again.

McDaniels has made a major contribution in the freestyle events, especially in relays, this year the Tide will be looking for the senior from Jamestown, North Carolina, to help out in the backstroke events and leading off the medley relay.

Strassburg returns for his junior season ready to team up with Voris to give the Tide a powerful tandem in any freestyle event from the 50 to 500 distance. The Mount

Pleasants, South Carolina, resident scored for Alabama in the 200 freestyle at the NCAA Championships last season and has the potential to do even better this year.

Sophomore Anna Lindberg and junior Tammy Kneer both bring NCAA experience to the Tide this year. Lindberg scored in the 100 butterfly at the NCAA Championships as well as swimming a leg on the Tide's 800 freestyle relay, earning All-America honors for both performances. Kneer saw duty on all of Alabama's freestyle relays at the NCAA Championships. She also earned All-America honors for her effort.

Alabama returns one All-America diver for the 1993-94 season in the person of junior Mike Tamberino. Tamberino earned a spot at the NCAA meet on the merit of a strong performance at the NCAA pre-qualification meet.

Junior Jill Tappen is ready to step into the hole left by the graduation of All-America Jennifer Mahaney. Tappen finalied last season and has scored the last two seasons at the SEC Championships and has the potential to make the NCAA Championships this season.

Distance swimmer Jimmy Pestrighelli is an important cog in Alabama's plan for success. The junior from River Edge, New Jersey, has carried the distance load for the Tide for the past two years and will be depended on to do the same this season. A two-year finalist in the mile, Pestrighelli has the potential to make the NCAA championship meet this year.

Junior Stacy Gillies has her distance days behind her. Co-captain for this season and the one just past, the West Palm Beach, Florida, native has moved down a notch on the distance ladder and will compete in the 100 through 500 distances in the freestyle events. For the past two years, Gillies has finalied in the 500 and the mile at the SEC

Championships. With the change in focus, she hopes to have the same success in the shorter events.

Alabama's utility man, Alex Hermeto will see action almost everywhere this season as he has for the last three years. The senior from Rio de Janeiro has served as the Tide's captain for the past two years, and will retain that role this year. In addition to providing depth almost everywhere in the line-up, Hermeto is Alabama's big gun in the 400 IM, an event that he has finalied in at the conference level each of the last three years.

Sophomore Karli Taylor shaved significant time off her previous career best to score for the Tide in the backstroke events at the 1993 SEC Championships. The Sunnyvale, California, native is just off the school record in the 200 backstroke and has a legitimate chance at it this season.

Huntsville native Milo Crawford has shown early season speed this season, posting a career best in the 50 freestyle already this season. The junior could see relay duty by the time the Tide rolls into SEC Championships.

In the early parts of the season, freshman Ann-Sofie Joensson is proving that Hermeto isn't the only swimmer who fills a catch-all role for the Tide. In her first three meets as a wearer of the crimson and white, Joensson has competed in a variety of freestyle, butterfly and IM events. She has the ability, like Hermeto, to swim anywhere she is needed.

A diver is another who stands out among newcomers to watch. In early season competition, freshman Josh Lubber has come through and won three events in three meets. Freshman walk-on Francine Mathot has made a big splash on the women's side, providing outstanding support in the breaststroke events in all three of the Tide's early season meets.

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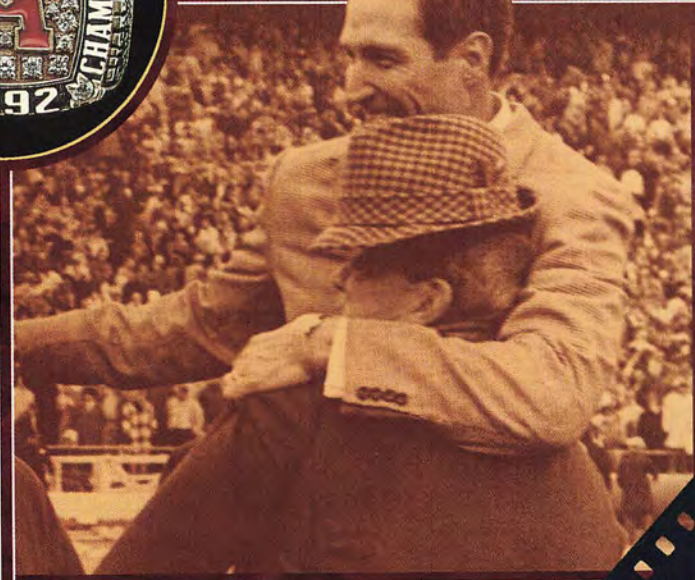
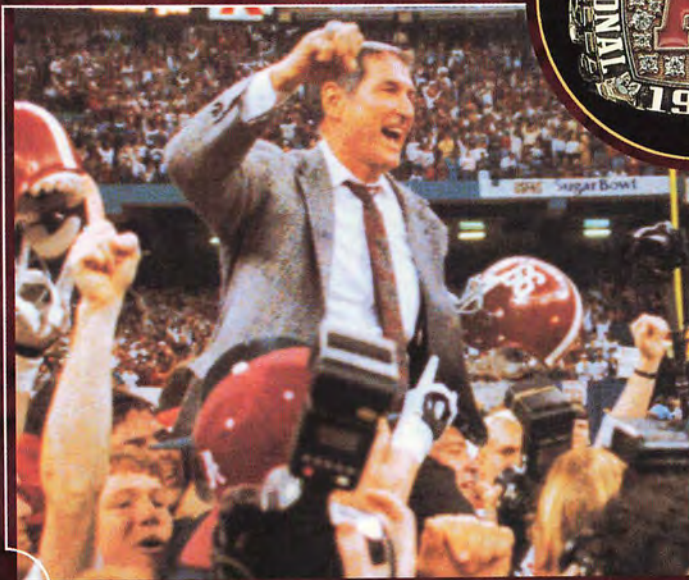
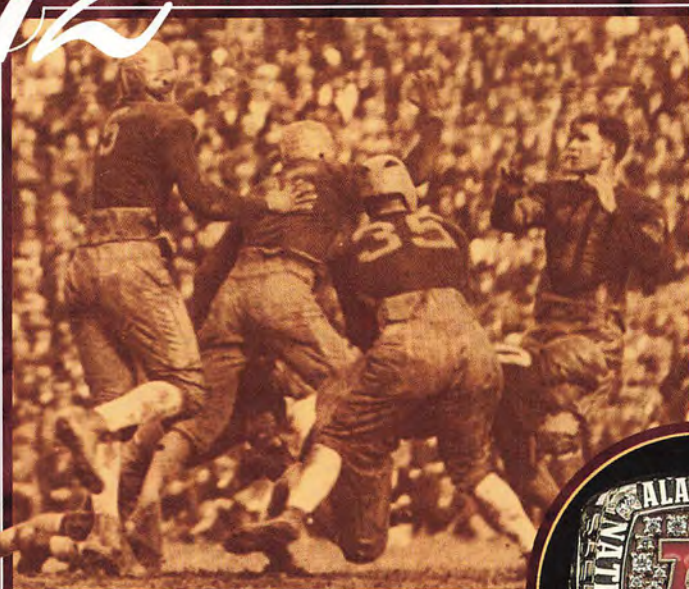
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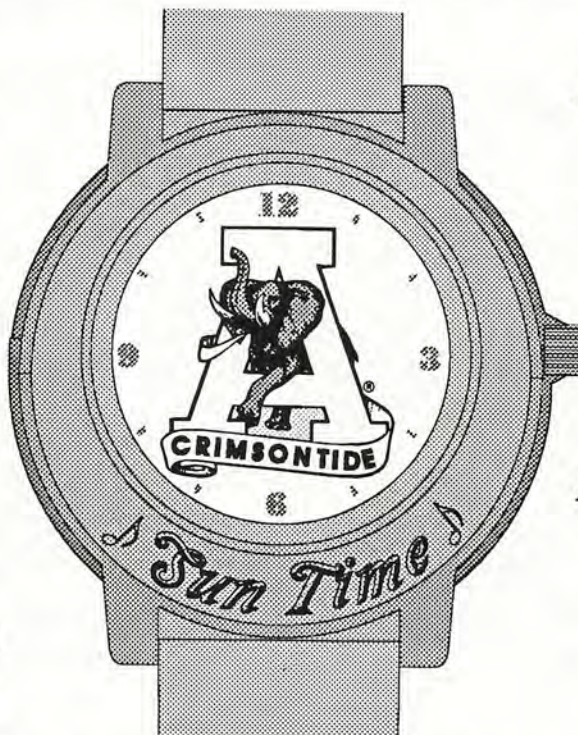
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There's Size In The South

by Chass Horton

Here is a look at some of the top linebackers and linemen around the region

The difference in very good football teams and other football teams is not usually the men who grab most of the headlines, the so-called skill position players. For the most part, games are won in the trenches and it is the big men—linemen and linebackers—who make the difference.

Although the state of Alabama has excellent high school football and even though through the years the Crimson Tide has had home-grown players as the backbone of the program, the very best Alabama football teams have also had a sprinkling of top performers from outside the state. For the most part, those come from the Southeast.

Here is a look at some of the top linemen and linebackers from around the South who are on the lists of the self-appointed recruiting experts and who are making all-star teams in the region's newspapers. Most will be in the news through scholarship signing time, which begins February 2.

As is usually the case, the state of Florida is loaded with college prospects. Possibly the top offensive line prospect in Florida is Derrick Balkom, a 6-6, 305-pound offensive lineman from Chipley. He was first team all-state as a junior and graded 80 per cent. He has passed the ACT and is considering FSU, Florida, Auburn and LSU, along with Alabama.

Hank Grant is a 6-3, 218-pound linebacker for Boca Ciega in St. Petersburg. Grant is a four-year starter at linebacker and was also a starter at tight end as a junior. He led his team in tackles as a junior and 30 of his 124 stops were behind the line of scrimmage. He is academically qualified and wants to study engineering. He is also an exceptional basketball player.

Lamont Green, 6-3, 223, is a linebacker for Miami South Bridge. As a junior he had 79 tackles, including 17 for losses. He is expected to be an inside linebacker in college.

Steve Jenkins is a 6-2, 218-pound linebacker for Cypress Lake High School in Fort Myers. Jenkins played full back and strong safety as a junior but is projected as an outside linebacker in college. Jenkins is a tremendous athlete and used his 4.5 speed in the 40 to win the state high hurdles championship. Jenkins has a solid GPA and is expected to qualify academically.

Ronnie Johnson is a 6-4, 315-pound offensive lineman for Ribault High School in Jacksonville. Johnson was second team all-state as a junior and is generally considered to be one of the top 100 players in the South. Johnson, who is an excellent run blocker, is very explosive off the ball and stays with his block until the play is over. Due to Johnson's



Josh Swords

athletic ability, college recruiters feel that he can play anywhere on the offensive line including center. Johnson is a solid student and has qualified academically.

Carlo Joseph is a 6-2, 210-pound linebacker from Deerfield Beach. Joseph was second team all state as a junior where he recorded 84 tackles. Joseph splits time between strong safety and linebacker in high school but is projected as an outside linebacker in college. His 4.5 speed should allow him to make a quick impact in college. Joseph is a good student and he is already academically eligible. Joseph is generally considered one of the south top 100 players.

Dusty Nettles is a 6-2, 218-pound linebacker for Lake Highlands High School in Orlando. As a junior, Nettles played at both fullback and

linebacker. As a fullback he gained over 900 yards and had 6 touchdowns. Although Nettles could play on either side of the ball in college, he is projected as either side of the ball in college, he is projected as either an inside or outside linebacker. Nettles has good speed (4.6 in the 40) and bench presses 310 pounds. He is expected to qualify academically and has a brother playing at Tulane. Tulane, Alabama, Florida State and Auburn are said to be the early leaders.

Noah Parker is a 6-5, 275-pound offensive lineman from Milton. Parker is generally considered one of the top 2 or 3 offensive linemen prospects in the state of Florida. He is also considered one of the top 100 players in the south. Parker is an outstanding athlete with unlimited potential. Presently he is considered to be a better run blocker than a pass blocker but has the potential to excel in both in college. Parker is an outstanding student who has qualified academically.

Jason Thomas is a 6-5, 275-pound offensive lineman for Parker High School in Jacksonville. Thomas is considered one of the 10 best offensive line prospects in the state of Florida and has qualified academically. Due to Thomas' athletic ability, he could play either offensive tackle or defensive tackle in college. Most college recruiters however project Thomas as an offensive lineman. Thomas is generally considered one of the top 100 players in the south.

Rod Walker is a 6-4, 280-pound defensive lineman from Milton. Walker is one of the top defensive lineman prospects in Florida where as a junior he had 60 tackles and 5 sacks. Walker has the perfect build for a defensive lineman and also has the speed, 4.9 in the 40, to be an effective pass rusher. Walker is expected to qualify and will have his choice of colleges in which to attend.

Recruiting experts feel that the state of Georgia has more top college prospects than it has had in several years. After

A Good Sign

Although it is a couple of months until high school senior football players can begin signing college scholarships, Alabama has received word from at least one prep star that he will be signing with Alabama.

While it is believed that Crimson Tide coaches have a number of private commitments from high school players, the first prepper to make his intentions known publicly is Chris Sign, a 6-1, 250-pound offensive lineman from Lamar High School in Arlington, Texas. Sign told the *Dallas Morning News* he had made an unofficial visit to Alabama, that Tide Head Coach Gene Stallings had offered him a scholarship, and that Sign and his family were convinced Bama was the right place for him. Sign cancelled planned official visits to Miami, Florida State, LSU and Texas Tech. Sign, who will make an official visit to Alabama in January, is not bound by his oral commitment.

Sign, a three-year starter and all-district player on one of the most successful teams in Texas, led his team in knockdown blocks with 11 through the first 11 games of the season. Lamar is in the 5A (largest classification in Texas) playoffs. Although he is primarily an offensive guard in high school, he is expected to be a center in college.

Sign's brothers were both college starters and team captains, Bobby at Baylor and Matt at Rice.

Two other players at Lamar are top prospects and both are believed planning to visit Alabama. They are Aaron Oliver, a 6-1, 180-pound wide receiver, and Jay Smith, a 6-5, 260-pound lineman.

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several down years in Georgia, this class of high school seniors is considered outstanding.

One of the top players in the state is Howard Bartley, a 6-3, 205-pound linebacker for Decatur. Bartley, who plays strong safety in high school is projected as an outside linebacker in college. A tremendous athlete, Bartley won the state high hurdles as a junior. Bartley is a fierce hitter who led his team in tackles as a junior with 117. He is an outstanding student and is expected to qualify academically.

Correy Bennett is a 6-3, 215-pound linebacker from Atlanta. Bennett is another top linebacker prospect who led his team in tackles as a junior averaging more than 10 a game. Some recruiting services have Bennett rated as the number three linebacker prospect in the state. He was all county as a junior and has qualified academically. With Bennett's 4.6 speed in the 40 he is projected as an outside linebacker in college.

Brooks Brodie is a 6-3, 245-pound offensive lineman from Tifton. Brodie is considered one of the top two or three offensive linemen in Georgia and was all-state as a junior. Brodie has started for 3 years on the offensive line for his father who is the coach at Tift County High School. Brodie averaged 80 per cent in his blocking assignments as a junior and is projected as a center in college. Brodie has already qualified academically and Alabama is said to be one of the schools he is strongly considering.

Antonio Cochran is a 6-5, 230-pound linebacker for Macon County High School. Cochran is generally considered one of the top 100 prospects in the South and probably the second best linebacker in the state. Cochran is a fierce hitter who plays from sideline to sideline. As a junior he had 189 tackles and seven quarterback sacks. Cochran is a tremendous athlete who started on the basketball team as a junior and averaged 20 points a game. Alabama is said to be one of the schools at the top of his list along with Georgia, Florida and Florida State.

Tyrone Dillard is a 6-3, 230-pound tight end from Riverdale. Dillard is considered one of the top tight end prospects in the country and probably the best in Georgia. Although Dillard is primarily known for his blocking ability, he has sure hands and averages close to 20 yards per reception as a junior. Dillard is also an outstanding defensive lineman prospect but will most likely play tight end in college. Dillard is an outstanding student who has already qualified academically.

Juaquin Feazell is a 6-4, 240-pound defensive lineman for Fort Valley High School in Peach County, Georgia. Feazell is generally regarded as the number one defensive lineman prospect in Georgia. By almost all recruiting services, Feazell is considered one of the top 10 prospects in the state. Feazell is extremely quick off the ball and his athletic ability helped him record 96 tackles as a junior with 14 of them behind the line of scrimmage. Feazell is an outstanding student who has already qualified academically.

Kris Gingrow is a 6-3, 250-pound offensive lineman from Valdosta. Gingrow was all area and all region as a junior where he graded 85 per cent on his blocking assignments. Last year Valdosta High School won the state championship and he was the anchor on that offensive line. Gingrow is an excellent run blocker and

should develop into a top flight college offensive lineman. He is academically eligible.

Cole Green is a 6-3, 270-pound offensive lineman from Lawrenceville. Green has good size and is projected as an offensive guard in college. He was all-county as a junior and is generally regarded as one of the top five offensive line prospects in the state of Georgia. Although Green has outstanding physical attributes, it is his determination that seems to set him apart from other offensive line prospects. Green has qualified academically.

Phil Henderson is a 6-5, 235-pound tight end from College Park. Henderson was a two-way starter as a junior playing both defensive end and tight end. As a defensive end he led his team with 73 tackles with 12 tackles behind the line of scrimmage. Henderson is extremely athletic and college recruiters are divided as to whether he will be a tight end or a defensive end in college. Henderson is expected to qualify academically.

David Pritchett is a 6-4, 225-pound tight end from Dublin. Pritchett is a good blocking tight end who is being recruited as both a tight end and a defensive end. He has qualified academically and due to his versatility he is considered a top college prospect.

Victor Rivers is a 6-4, 270-pound offensive lineman from Atlanta.

Shavollo Robinson is a 6-4, 272-pound offensive lineman from Sylvania. Robinson is a terrific run blocker and is generally considered one of the top 10 offensive line prospects in the state. Due to his size and strength, Robinson is projected as an offensive tackle in college. A solid student, Robinson is expected to qualify academically.

Deshaan Simmons is a 6-4, 230-pound defensive lineman from Duluth. Simmons is considered one of the top 10 prospects in the state after a sensational junior season. Simmons greatest asset is his 4.8 speed in the 40 to go along with his tremendous strength. Simmons will pursue a ball carrier all over the field until the tackle is made. He has already qualified academically and is said to be considering numerous schools, all of them out of state.

Andre Smith is a 6-3, 234-pound tight end from Decatur.

Paul Snellings is a 6-4, 235-pound defensive lineman from LaGrange. Snellings is one of the top defensive lineman prospects in the state. He plays the run extremely well. Snellings led his team in tackles as a junior and also recorded 11 quarterback sacks and 18 tackles behind the line of scrimmage. Snellings is a solid student who has qualified academically. Look for Snellings to grow into a top flight defensive end prospect in college.

Demetro Stephens is a 6-3, 218-pound linebacker from Sandersville. Stephens is considered by some to be the top linebacker in Georgia and the nation. Stephens is a tremendous hitter who always seems to be in the right place at the right time. Being in the right place at the right time allowed Stephens to have over 200 tackles and 11 quarterback sacks as a junior. Stephens is a tremendous athlete and due to his size is projected as an inside linebacker in college. Stephens has qualified academically.

Travis Stroud is a 6-4, 270-pound offensive lineman from Dunwoody. Stroud is considered one of the top two or three offensive linemen in the state. Stroud is a tremendous athlete who

could play offensive or defensive line in college. Stroud has been a four-year starter, and has been quoted as saying he would prefer playing defensive line in college. Stroud is a great all around athlete and is one of the most heavily recruited players in the south. He has qualified academically.

Although the University of Alabama recruited in Louisiana unsuccessfully last year, the Crimson Tide once again is making a strong push in the state.

One of the top players in Louisiana is Lawrence Hart a 6-4, 230-pound tight end from Woodlawn High School in Shreveport. Hart who only caught 10 passes as a junior due to the fact that his high school team hardly threw the football, is considered one of the top tight end prospects in the South. Virtually all recruiting services have Hart rated as one of the top 100 football players in the South. Hart is a dominating run blocker with great hands and good speed. Hart is a top athlete who has excelled in track and football as a junior. Hart has a solid GPA. He lists numerous SEC schools including Alabama as schools he is considering.

Turk Olsen is a 6-4, 280-pound offensive lineman from Baton Rouge. Olsen is generally considered one of the top four or five offensive line prospects in the state. Olsen is a very strong football player who bench presses close to 300 pounds. Olsen has tremendous arm and leg strength and he is one of the state's top

wrestlers. Olsen has qualified academically and is considered one of the top 100 players in the South. Although Olsen plays both sides of the ball in high school, he is projected as an offensive tackle in college.

Jarvis Reado is a 6-6, 280-pound offensive lineman from Marrero Shaw. Reado is considered the premier offensive lineman in the state and one of the best in the country. Reado is an aggressive blocker who fires off the ball extremely well. Although Reado has tremendous size, it is his quickness off the ball that makes him such a devastating offensive lineman. Reado has qualified academically and lists numerous schools throughout the country as schools he is considering. Alabama is one of these schools.

Mike Sutton is a 6-5, 220-pound linebacker from Salmen High School in Slidell. Sutton who led his team in tackles as a junior with 70 is regarded as the top linebacker prospect in the state. He is also considered one of the top 100 prospects in the South. Sutton who was all-state as a junior, has the size and speed to play middle linebacker in college. Sutton is projected to qualify academically and Alabama is thought to be one of the schools he is considering.

Jason Wiltz is a 6-4, 280-pound defensive lineman from New Orleans. Although Wiltz plays both offensive tackle and defensive tackle in high school, he is projected as a defensive tackle in college. Wiltz is considered the num-

ber one defensive lineman in the state. Wiltz is an excellent pass rusher and is constantly double-and triple-teamed. Wiltz uses his strength to shed blockers and pursue the ball. Wiltz lists LSU, Tulane and Alabama among schools he is considering.

Probably no other state, other than Alabama, has given the University of Alabama more top-flight high school players than Mississippi.

One of the best players in Mississippi is Kenny Christian, a 6-3, 235-pound defensive lineman from Brandon. Christian led his team in tackles as a junior with 84. Christian is a consistent player with unlimited potential. He was all-area as a junior and uses his 4.8 speed in the 40 to track down the opposing ball carrier. Christian has qualified academically and lists the in-state schools along with Alabama and Notre Dame.

Chad Ford is a 6-2, 285-pound defensive lineman from Provine High School in Jackson. Ford plays both ways in high school but is projected as a defensive lineman in college due to his quickness. He has qualified academically and lists several SEC schools, including Alabama, as his early favorites. Ford is generally regarded as one of the top 10 players in the state.

Benaderyl Franklin is a 6-4, 210-pound linebacker from Moss Point. He was all-state as a junior, recording 65 tackles and 15 sacks. Franklin is a three-year starter and his 4.7

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speed in the 40 allows him to make big plays when his team needs them. He is expected to qualify academically.

Bob Knight is a 6-8, 300-pound offensive lineman from Pearl. Knight is considered one of the top two or three offensive line prospects in the state. He is extremely strong and won the state 5A shot put title. Knight is expected to qualify academically.

Lytrel Pollard is a 6-3, 212-pound tight end from Stringer. Pollard is a tremendous athlete and plays numerous positions. Due to his versatility, Pollard is considered one of the top 100 players in the South. Although college recruiters debate as to which position he will play in college there is no debate over his abilities. Pollard's team has won three consecutive state titles and he has been an integral part of these championships. Pollard has been linked to numerous schools throughout the South, including Alabama.

Marlon Pope is a 6-5, 275-pound defensive lineman from Hattiesburg. Pope is regarded as the top lineman prospect in the state. He is projected as a defensive lineman in college. Pope has all of the attributes needed to be a top flight defensive lineman in college. His strength, size, speed and desire to excel allow him to consistently overcome the double-and even triple-teaming he goes against each week. His brother attended Southern Mississippi.

Dwayne Rudd is a 6-3, 240-pound linebacker from South Panola High School in Batesville.

Considered by many as the state's best linebacker prospect and one of the best in the South, Rudd's size and speed (4.5) make him the prototype of an SEC inside linebacker. As a junior he led his team in tackles with over 100. Rudd is an honor student who will definitely qualify academically. He lists Alabama as one of the schools he is considering.

Robert Saums is a 6-3, 270-pound offensive lineman from Central Hinds Academy in Raymond. Although Saums plays at a small private school he is drawing a great deal of attention from college recruiters. He has great size and strength and is projected as a center in college. Saums has qualified academically and it has been reported that he attended Alabama's football camp this summer.

Cam Smith is a 6-7, 280-pound offensive lineman from Cleveland. Regarded as the top offensive line prospect in the state, Smith is a tremendous pass blocker. Smith is extremely quick and is already qualified academically. Alabama is at the top of his list.

Last year Alabama signed perhaps the state of South Carolina's top offensive lineman in Joel Holiday. Although Alabama may not be recruiting a large number of players in this state there are a few standouts that cannot be overlooked.

One of these is Ty Byars a 6-3, 218-pound linebacker from Gaffney. Byars is an outstanding pass rusher who reported seven sacks and

100 tackles as a junior. He is projected as an outside linebacker in college. Byars is considered one of the top two linebacker prospects in South Carolina. He is expected to qualify and lists South Carolina, Clemson and Alabama as schools he is considering.

Josh Cash is a 6-2, 260-pound offensive lineman from Spartanburg. Cash is projected as a college center. His brother, Danny, played at Alabama for Ray Perkins.

Jeff Coleman is a 6-4, 230-pound linebacker from Gaffney. Coleman is regarded as one of the top five players in South Carolina. As a junior he led his team in tackles with 167. In college, Coleman is projected as an inside linebacker or defensive end. Although he has the speed to cover tight ends on pass plays, he excels in pursuit of ball carriers. He is expected to qualify academically and is said to be considering Alabama.

Tony Plantin is a 6-4, 240-pound defensive lineman from Pendleton. Plantin is an excellent athlete whose quickness and lateral pursuit make him a top college prospect. He was all-area as a junior and also lettered in basketball. He is expected to qualify academically and he is listed with Bama.

Holland Postel is a 6-6, 260-pound offensive lineman from Summerville and is one of the top prospects in the state. He is a three-year starter who is fundamentally sound. A long list of schools is in pursuit of Postel, who is expected to qualify academically.

One of the best things about Alabama's long domination of Tennessee in football is that so often the Crimson Tide's success has been the result of players from the Volunteer state playing for Bama. In recent years Bama has been able to pluck several of the top prospects from Tennessee.

Among the top prospects in Tennessee this year is Charles Ballard, a 6-5, 260-pound defensive lineman from Memphis Northside. Ballard, who has a 4.8 time in the 40, is a solid student who is expected to qualify academically.

Cletidus Hunt, 6-4, 266, is a defensive lineman at Memphis Whitehaven, the same high school that sent Curtis Alexander to Bama last year. He was primarily an offensive guard and linebacker as a junior. He has 4.7 speed in the 40 and is among the top 10 prospects in Tennessee.

Zane Lewis, 6-3, 275, is an offensive and defensive lineman at Memphis Raleigh Egypt, but is projected as an offensive lineman in college. He has already qualified academically, which raises his standing with college recruiters.

Will Newman, 6-4, 265, is an offensive lineman at Dandridge Jefferson County and ranks among the top 10 in Tennessee. As a junior he graded 75 per cent in his blocking assignments. He has already qualified academically.

David Reeves is a 6-4, 275-pound lineman at Bartlett, where he plays both offensive guard (his projected college position) and defensive tackle. He bench presses 350 and is very quick.

Josh Swords, 6-3, 270, from Brentwood Academy is considered the top offensive line prospect in Tennessee this year, perhaps the top prospect regardless of position. Swords' father played for Bill Oliver when the Tide's current secondary coach was head coach at Tennessee-Chattanooga, and for that reason many expect Alabama to have an edge in recruiting Swords.

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New Tiders Come On Board

by Donna Fromme

Some Alabama squads get part of recruiting work finished in November

When David Hobbs was selected to be Alabama's men's basketball coach prior to last season, the big question among many Tide fans was, "Can he recruit?" Hobbs had not been an on-the-road recruiter as an assistant coach. Last year he answered that question pretty well with a recruiting class ranked among the nation's best. In the early signing period this year, he's off to another good start.

Sports other than football and women's volleyball have a one week window in early November in which to sign high school seniors and junior college sophomores, getting that business out of the way for both the college coaches and the athletes before the final seasons get into full gear.

Hobbs elected to go the junior college route, getting one signee and one commitment from players in Florida. The signee is actually an Alabamian, Marco Whitfield, a 6-0 point guard from Decatur who plays at Central Florida Community College in Ocala. Through four games this year he was averaging 13 points and five assists per game.

Last year Whitfield led his team in scoring with 17 points per game, not an exceptionally high average, but good on a team with six players who averaged in double figures. He connected on 51 per cent of his field goals, 79 per cent of his free throws and 34 per cent of his three-point attempts. In addition, he dished out 166 assists and recorded 56 steals for Coach Gene Smithson, who gained fame as the very successful coach at Wichita State. *Sporting News* ranks him the number five junior college point guard in the nation.

Whitfield played his prep basketball for Coach Wally Sanders at Decatur, where he helped the Red Raiders make the Class 6A final four in 1992. As a senior he averaged 21 points and four assists per game in a 24-9 season.

Additionally, and somewhat curiously, Alabama received a commitment from one of the nation's top junior college players, who said he would sign with Bama in the spring. Chris Davis, a 6-7 forward for defending national champion Pensacola Junior College, is a native of Lakeland, Florida, who originally signed with Kansas. Last year he was his team's second



Chris Davis



Pam Duncan



LaToya Caudle

most productive player as he averaged 17.3 points, 7.3 rebounds, 38 blocked shots and 81 dunks. His coach, Bob Marlin, jokingly says that Davis needs to develop a jump shot, but so far all he's had to do is out-quick his opponent for the easy dunk. Pensacola was 31-5 last year.

By not signing, Davis is not bound to Alabama. However, his coach believes Davis will stick to his commitment. The advantage is for his teammates, who will be seen by college scouts who continue to pursue Davis this year. *Sporting News* ranks him the top junior college player in the nation.

Women's Basketball Coach Rick Moody loses three seniors to graduation this year, but he countered by signing four players in November. The most-lauded of those perhaps is Carrollton's Pam Duncan, a 6-0 forward who is a *USA Today* honorable mention All-America and three-time all-state selection. Last year she averaged 30 points and 8.1 rebounds per game in leading Carrollton to a 27-1 record and the state 1A championship. In the state tournament she scored a record 85 points, including scoring 29 points and pulling down 16 rebounds in the championship game. She set

a school record with 34 three-point shots and is the student council president.

One of the best players in Alabama history was Linda Burgess of Madison, now playing professionally in Europe. But her Bob Jones High School rebounding record is history. LaToya Caudle, a new Bama signee, broke Burgess' mark in her freshman year, pulling down 365. She also broke Burgess' single game record by grabbing 29 in one game. The 6-2 point guard—that's right, point guard—averaged 20.5 points and 19.9 rebounds per game last year. She was all-state and a member of the state's AAU championship team.

Kidada Holtzclaw helped Sylacauga to the state 5A championship in 1992 and the final four last year. She got her career off to a big start by scoring 31 points in a game as a freshman. She is also the state high jump champion.

Moody went out of state to land Brittney Ezell, a 5-6 guard from Franklin, Tennessee. The all-state performer averaged 16 points, 4.5 rebounds, 3.5 assists and 3.1 steals per game last year. She's also all-state in soccer.

New Alabama women's Tennis Coach Jim Tressler hadn't been on the job a week when he announced his first



Kidada Holtzclaw



Brittney Ezell



Robert Sproul

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Brian Wright



Karen Jones



Danielle McAdams

signee. Tressler inked Erin Braeuning of Dr. Phillips High in Orlando, Florida. She is ranked among the nation's top 50 in 18-and-under.

John Kreis didn't have to look far to land a signee for the Tide men's tennis team, Briarwood Christian of Birmingham's Robert Sproul. He is his team's captain and most valuable player and undefeated in high school competition since the ninth grade. He was state champion last year and has been the number one player on the Alabama Junior Davis Cup team the past two years. He is ranked first in the state, eighth in the South and 93rd in the nation in 16s and has qualified for the National Indoor Championships. He is also an honor student.

Dick Spybey will have three new players for the Alabama golf team next year. Brian Wright of UMS-Wright High School in Mobile was the 1992 state champion and 1993 runnerup and is a two-time runnerup in the Alabama Golf Association Junior Championship. His team has won the state championship the past two years. He was a quarterfinalist in the USGA Junior Championship and runnerup at the Future Masters.

John Stahlschmidt of St. Louis, Missouri, and the Chaminade College Prep has also signed with Alabama. He is Missouri state junior champion and holds his school's record by being medalist in 11 of 13 matches. He finished in the top ten in four national events last summer, including a sixth place at the Future Masters.

Tuscaloosans, and particularly players from Tuscaloosa Academy, have been a mainstay of the Bama men's golf team in recent years and the latest will be Robert Ireland. He won the Alabama Golf Association Junior Championship this past summer and led his school to a state runnerup spot last spring. He is also a member of the basketball team and is an honor student.

Jonty Skinner has one signee for the Alabama women's swimming team. Karen Jones of Birmingham's Vestavia Hills is the state record-holder in the 100-meter but-

terfly. The honor student also competes in cross country. She qualified for YMCA and USS Junior nationals and was an all-star at Southern Zones Championships.

Sarah Patterson has added two women to the Crimson Tide gymnastics team. Danielle McAdams of Collinsville, Illinois, attends Harrison High School in Evansville, Indiana, where she is an honor student. She is a National Elite competitor who has competed in the America Classic and the U.S. Classic. Her top scores include a 38.35 all-around. She finished first place in All-Around at the Alamo Invitational.

Joining her in the freshman class will be Merritt Booth of Fort Worth, Texas. She attends Pflugerville High School and competes on the Level 10 National Team, where she finished second all-around and finished in three events in 1993. She has competed at the 1992 Elite Classic and received a Level 10 Award in 1990. She was Gymnast of the Year in 1993. She is an honor student with best scores of 9.75 on vault, 9.6 on uneven bars, 9.5 on balance beam, 9.75 on floor and 38.15 all-around.

Coach Barry Shollenberger has signed at least four new baseball players for Bama. Three of the new Tiders are pitchers.

Shane Williamson is a right handed pitcher from Ridgeway, Pennsylvania, who had a 10-0 record and struck out 105 batters in 50 innings as a high school junior last spring.

Two other pitchers will transfer in from junior colleges, Tim Young, a left hander from Chippola Junior College in Florida, and Will Schleuss, also a lefthander, from Hagerstown in Maryland. Schleuss formerly pitched for Miami.

Alabama also added a prep star from Huntsville. John Proctor is a first baseman and third baseman at Grissom High School.

No early signing period signees have been announced for women's golf or track and field. A school may not announce signees until signed scholarships have been received by the school.

Alabama's 1992-93 Winter Sports Schedules

Men's Basketball

DATE/ UA Score	OPPONENT	TIME/ Opp. Score
79	*Levski-Totel of Bulgaria	65
Nov. 22	*Spirit Express	7:30
Dec. 1	Chattanooga	7:30
Dec. 4	@ Washington State	9:00
Dec. 9	Northwestern State	7:30
Dec. 18	Florida A&M	1:30
Dec. 21	@ Southern Miss	7:00
	Low Country Classic @ Charleston, S.C.	
Dec. 28	Delaware State	5:30
Dec. 29	Charleston or Penn State	TBA
Jan. 5	@ South Carolina	6:30
Jan. 8	Arkansas	1:30
Jan. 12	Vanderbilt	7:30
Jan. 15	@ Ole Miss (JP)	12:30
Jan. 17	Tennessee-Martin	7:30
Jan. 19	@ LSU	7:00
Jan. 22	Florida	1:30
Jan. 25	@ Auburn (ESPN)	8:40
Jan. 29	Mississippi State (JP)	3:00
Feb. 2	@ Kentucky (JP)	7:00
Feb. 5	@ Georgia (JP)	1:00
Feb. 8	LSU (ESPN)	8:40
Feb. 14	Mercer	7:30
Feb. 16	@ Arkansas (JP)	7:00
Feb. 19	Tennessee	1:30
Feb. 23	Tennessee State	7:30
Feb. 26	Ole Miss	1:30
Mar. 2	@ Mississippi State	7:00
Mar. 5	Auburn	1:30
Mar. 10-	SEC Tournament	
Mar. 13	@ Memphis	

*Exhibition game
All times central

Women's Basketball

DATE/ UA Score	OPPONENT	TIME/ Opp. Score
69	*Levski-Totel of Bulgaria	63
Nov. 24	*Athletes In Action Cyclone Classic @ Iowa State	7:00
Nov. 26	Eastern Washington	8:00
Nov. 27	Iowa State or Troy State	TBA
	Shoney's Classic @ Tuscaloosa	
Dec. 3	Coppin State	6:00
Dec. 4	Grambling or Tennessee St	TBA
Dec. 8	@ East Tennessee	6:30
Dec. 11	Louisiana Tech	7:00
Dec. 29-	Central Florida Classic	
Dec. 31	@ Orlando	TBA
	(Central Florida, North Carolina, FSU, Kentucky, East Carolina, Radford, Richmond)	
Jan. 5	Georgia	7:00
Jan. 7	@ Illinois	7:30
Jan. 9	@ Vanderbilt	2:00
Jan. 12	@ Troy State	7:00
Jan. 16	Florida	2:00
Jan. 18	Mercer	7:00
Jan. 22	@ South Carolina	1:00
Jan. 26	South Alabama	7:00
Jan. 30	LSU	2:00
Feb. 2	@ Arkansas	7:00
Feb. 5	@ Tennessee	6:00
Feb. 13	Kentucky	1:30
Feb. 16	Auburn	7:00
Feb. 19	Mississippi State	11 a.m.
Feb. 23	Alabama State	5:00
Feb. 26	@ Ole Miss	7:00
Feb. 28	Troy State	7:00
Mar. 4-	SEC Tournament	
Mar. 7	@ Chattanooga	

*Exhibition game
All times central

Gymnastics

DATE/ UA Score	OPPONENT	TIME/ Opp. Score
Dec. 12	*Meet The Team	2:00
Jan. 15	Auburn	7:30
Kam/ 23	@ Arizona State Stanford @ Arizona State	1:00
Jan. 28	@ Kentucky	7:00
Feb. 5	Georgia	7:30
Feb. 11	Penn State	7:30
Feb. 18	@ LSU	7:30
Feb. 25	Florida	7:30
March 5	@ Auburn	7:30
March 12	@ Georgia	6:30
March 18	LSU	7:30
March 26	SEC Championships @ Auburn	
April 9	NCAA Central Region	
April 21-	NCAA Championships	
April 23	@ Salt Lake City, Utah	

*Exhibition meet
All times central

Men's Indoor Track

DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT
Jan. 15	Saluki Invitational @ Carbondale, Ill.	
Jan. 21	Barnett Bank Invitational @ Gainesville	
Feb. 5	Purple Tiger Invitational @ Baton Rouge	
Feb. 11-	Sooner Invitational	
Feb. 12	@ Oklahoma City	
Feb. 26-	SEC Championships	
Feb. 27	@ Gainesville	
March 5	NCAA Qualifiers Invitational @ Gainesville	
March 11-	NCAA Championships	
March 12	@ Indianapolis	

Men's Swimming & Diving

DATE/ UA Score	OPPONENT	TIME/ Opp. Score
129	@ Clemson	114
117	@ South Carolina	126
162	LSU	81
125	@ Iowa	175
Dec. 3-	Rammer Jammer	3:00 (Trials)
Dec. 5	Invitational	7:00 (Finals)
Jan. 7	Florida	1:00
Jan. 10	@Florida State & North Carolina State @ FSU	2:00
Jan. 29	@ Auburn	11:00 a.m.
Feb. 5	Tennessee	11:00 a.m.
Feb. 16-	SEC Championships	
Feb. 19	@ Auburn	
March 4	Kentucky	TBA
March 5	Alabama Invitational	TBA
March 11-	NCAA Diving Prelims	
March 12	@ Auburn	
March 24-	NCAA Championships	
March 26	@ Minneapolis	

All times central

Women's Swimming & Diving

DATE/ UA Score	OPPONENT	TIME/ Opp. Score
132.5	@ Clemson	110.5
94	@ South Carolina	151
143	LSU	100
175	@ Houston	125
101	@ Texas	196
Dec. 3-	Rammer Jammer	3:00 (Trials)
Dec. 5	Invitational	7:00 (Finals)
Jan. 7	Florida	1:00
Jan. 28	@ Auburn	7:00
Feb. 4	Tennessee	7:00
Feb. 16-	SEC Championships	
Feb. 19	@ Auburn	
March 4	Kentucky	TBA
March 5	Alabama Invitational	TBA
March 11-	NCAA Diving Prelims	
March 12	@ Auburn	
March 17-	NCAA Championships	
March 19	@ Indianapolis	

All times central

Women's Indoor Track

DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT
Jan. 15	Saluki Invitational @ Carbondale, Ill.	
Jan. 21	Barnett Bank Invitational @ Gainesville	
Feb. 5	Purple Tiger Invitational @ Baton Rouge	
Feb. 11-	Sooner Invitational	
Feb. 12	@ Oklahoma City	
Feb. 26-	SEC Championships	
Feb. 27	@ Gainesville	
March 5	NCAA Qualifiers Invitational @ Gainesville	
March 11-	NCAA Championships	
March 12	@ Indianapolis	

Schedules Of Alabama's 1993 Football Opponents

Team	Sept. 4	Sept. 11	Sept. 18	Sept. 25	Oct. 2	Oct. 9	Oct. 16	Oct. 23	Oct. 30	Nov. 6	Nov. 13	Nov. 20	Nov. 27
TULANE Green Wave New Orleans, La.	@ ALABAMA (Birmingham) 17-31	@ Rice 0-34	William & Mary 10-0	Mississippi State 10-36	Navy 27-25	Southwest Louisiana 15-36	@ TCU 7-14		@ Boston College 14-42	@ Southern Miss 17-15	North Carolina 10-42	@ LSU 10-24	Dec. 4 @ Hawaii
VANDERBILT Commodores Nashville, Tenn.	@ Wake Forest 27-12	ALABAMA 6-17	@ Ole Miss 7-49		Auburn 10-14	Cincinnati 17-7	Georgia 3-41	@ South Carolina 0-22		Kentucky 12-7	Navy 41-7	@ Florida 0-52	@ Tennessee
ARKANSAS Razorbacks Fayetteville, Ark.	@ SMU 10-6	South Carolina 18-17	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) 3-43	Memphis St. @ Little Rock 0-6	@ Georgia 20-10	Tennessee @ Little Rock 14-28	@ Ole Miss (Jackson) 0-19		Auburn 21-31	Mississippi State @ Little Rock 13-13	Tulsa 24-11		@ LSU
LOUISIANA TECH Bulldogs Ruston, La.	@ Tennessee 0-50		@ South Carolina 3-34	@ ALABAMA (Birmingham) 3-56	Arkansas State 17-3		@ East Carolina 28-31	@ San Jose State 6-31	Northern Illinois 17-16	Nevada- Las Vegas 23-28	@ Utah State 13-24	Central Florida 16-38	@ Southwest Louisiana
SOUTH CAROLINA Gamecocks Columbia, S.C.	@ Georgia 23-21	@ Arkansas 17-18	Louisiana Tech 34-3	Sept. 23 Kentucky 17-21	ALABAMA 6-17	East Carolina 27-3	@ Mississippi State 0-23	Vanderbilt 22-0	@ Tennessee 3-55	Florida 26-37	Clemson 13-16		
TENNESSEE Volunteers Knoxville, Tenn.	Louisiana Tech 50-0	Georgia 38-6	@ Florida 34-41	LSU 42-20	Duke 52-19	Arkansas @ Little Rock 28-14	@ ALABAMA (Birmingham) 17-17		South Carolina 55-3	Louisville 45-10		@ Kentucky 48-0	Vanderbilt
OLE MISS Rebels Oxford, Miss.	Sept. 2 @ Auburn 12-16	Chattanooga 40-7	Vanderbilt 49-7	Georgia 31-14	@ Kentucky 0-21	Arkansas @ Jackson 19-0	ALABAMA 14-19		@ LSU 17-19	@ Memphis State 13-19	Northern Illinois 44-0		@ Mississippi State
SOUTHERN MISS Golden Eagles Hattiesburg, Miss.	Pittsburgh 10-14		Northeast Louisiana 44-37	@ Auburn 24-35	Southwestern Louisiana 7-13	@ Georgia 24-54	@ Louisville 27-35	East Carolina 24-16	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) 0-40	Tulane 15-17	@ Memphis State 9-20	@ Tulsa 30-30	
LSU Fighting Tigers Baton Rouge, La.	@ Texas A&M 0-24	@ Mississippi State 18-16	Auburn 34-10	@ Tennessee 20-42	Utah State 38-17	Florida 3-58	@ Kentucky 17-35		@ Ole Miss 19-17	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) 17-13		Tulane 24-10	Arkansas
MISSISSIPPI STATE Bulldogs Shreveport, Miss.	Memphis State 35-45	LSU 16-18	@ Tulane 36-10	@ Florida 24-38	@ Auburn 17-31	South Carolina 23-0	Arkansas State 15-15	Kentucky 17-26	Arkansas @ Little Rock 13-13	@ ALABAMA (Tuscaloosa) 25-36		Ole Miss	
AUBURN Tigers Auburn, Ala.	Sept. 2 Ole Miss 16-12	Samford 35-7	@ LSU 34-10	Southern Miss 35-24	@ Vanderbilt 14-10	Mississippi State 31-17	Florida 38-35	@ Arkansas 31-21	New Mexico 55-14	@ Georgia 42-28	ALABAMA 22-14		

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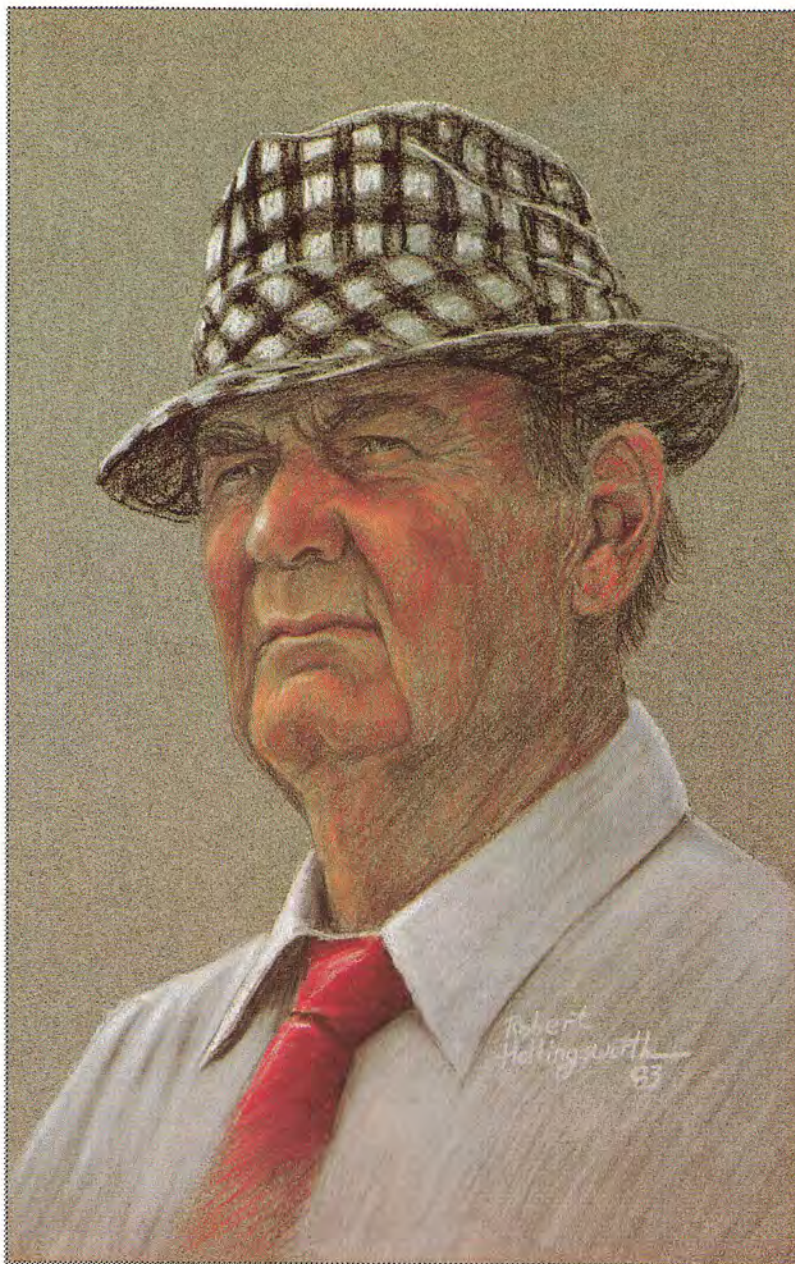
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